



■ SAT SPECIAL / A2-I

Superman's seminal story told anew

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Inflation slowed down to 7.1% in April-NSO

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Wie is first woman to make men's cut since 1945



Hunger level among Pinoys at all-time high, says SWS

By Kate Pedrosa
PDI Research

MORE FILIPINOS ARE GOING HUNGRY, according to a recent survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations.

Some 2.8 million families in the country experienced having had nothing to eat at least once in the past three months, as the hunger level in the

HUNGER / A4

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Saturday, May 6, 2006

★★

8 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 147 P18

website: www.inq7.net

PACQUIAO / A6

Pacquiao in for new fight, throws hat into political ring

By Aquiles Z. Zonio
PDI Mindanao Bureau

GENERAL SANTOS CITY —With Manny Pacquiao's money, popularity and charisma, this new fight is in the bag.

We're not talking about



Aragoncillo admits spying for GMA foes

Erap, Ping named co-plotters in bid to oust Gloria



ARTIST'S SKETCH of Leandro Aragoncillo, former White House and FBI staffer, who has pleaded guilty to passing classified information to opponents of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY—A Filipino-American intelligence analyst admitted Thursday that for five years he passed top secret information gleaned from White House and Federal Bureau of Investigation computers to conspirators he said were trying to overthrow President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Leandro Aragoncillo, 47, a naturalized US citizen who was born in the Philippines, pleaded guilty to a four-count indictment.

The conspirators used code words to refer to various people, including calling Ms Arroyo "The Penguin," Aragoncillo admitted.

Aragoncillo, shackled at the feet and wearing green jail garb, himself did not identify them.

But according to documents filed in the US District Court in Newark, they included former President Joseph Estrada, opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson and former House Speaker Arnulfo Fuentebella.

A justice department official said the supposed conspirators included another politician who served in the Philippine House of Representatives, and a mayor of a city near Manila.

San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, son of the former President, has admitted receiving e-mails

ARAGONCILLO / A8



ESTRADA: Unindicted co-conspirator



LACSON: Unindicted co-conspirator

Erap et al. could face rebellion raps—DOJ

By Armand N. Nocum

OUSTED PRESIDENT JOSEPH Estrada yesterday denied any role in a US espionage case dealing with alleged theft of classified documents, but the Department of Justice said only events would tell if his hands were clean.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the government would file rebellion charges against Estrada, Sen. Panfilo Lacson and others if there was evidence that the espionage case involving a Filipino-American in the United States was linked to plots to unseat President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"Any case filed here will strengthen the case there," Gonzalez told the INQUIRER, commenting on the plea bargaining deal struck between US authorities and former Federal Bureau of Investigation intelligence analyst Leandro Aragoncillo.

The Filipino-born former FBI officer has pleaded guilty to passing secrets to alleged plotters in the Philippines whom Federal prosecutors identified as Estrada, Lacson and former House Speaker Arnulfo Fuentebella.

Estrada told the INQUIRER the information he got from Aragoncillo was not classified and dealt with matters of public knowledge.

Lacson did not answer calls or reply to text messages. He has also maintained that the information passed on to him by Michael Ray Aquino, his former police aide and a coaccused of Aragoncillo, was not classified.

Calls to Fuentebella also were not answered.

ERAP / A8

Batasan 5 face arrest if they leave House

By Tarra V. Quismundo,
Dona Z. Pazzibugan
and Michael Lim Ubac

DESPITE A JUDGE'S ORDER rejecting their inclusion in a rebellion case filed by the Department of Justice, the five left-wing party-list lawmakers in the protective custody of the House of Representatives will be arrested once they leave the premises, police warned yesterday.

Senior Supt. Benjamin de los Santos, spokesperson of the Philippine National Police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, said it had a standing or-

der from the DOJ to arrest the so-called "Batasan 5."

Judge Jenny Lind Delorino of the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 137 said her resolution issued Thursday afternoon had no implication on the continued stay at the Batasan complex of Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casiño and Joel Virador of Bayan Muna, Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis, and Liza Maza of Gabriela.

"Nothing at all, nada," the judge told the INQUIRER. "Their custody was not an issue in the amended information being filed

BATASAN 5 / A6

'Golden Buddha' heirs suffer setback in US suit

SAN FRANCISCO—NEARLY 10,000 victims of human rights abuses by former Philippine ruler Ferdinand Marcos' government should share the \$30 million to \$40 million that heirs of a treasure hunter imprisoned by Marcos had sought for themselves, a US court ruled on Thursday.

Roger Roxas, a locksmith turned treasure hunter, found gold he claimed to be part of the so-called Yamashita treasure, named for a Japanese general who during World War II allegedly stashed booty from across Asia in the Philippines.

Marcos, who ruled the Philippines from 1966-1986, allegedly took it and had Roxas imprisoned.

In a lawsuit, Roxas' heirs argued the former ruler's riches could in part be traced to the gold, and sought compensation from an estimated \$35 million to \$40 million in a Merrill Lynch account established by a Marcos shell company.

But a three-judge panel of the US 9th Circuit Court of Appeals held the heirs should be considered part of the 9,539-person class that won a \$2-billion award against the Marcos estate over human rights abuses under his rule.

The decision will allow the class to divide the \$35 million to \$40 million, marking the first opportunity for victims of human rights

GOLDEN / A4

Stocks post biggest gain in 5 years

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SHARE PRICES SURGED BY 4.22 percent yesterday, their biggest single-day gain in five years, as foreign investors bought into blue chips following a slew of positive economic and corporate data.

It was the fourth session in a row that the market has regis-

tered hefty gains, soaring by a total of 199.7 points since April 28.

The benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange composite index jumped by 99.95 points to 2,470.24, its best finish since July 22, 1999 when the index hit 2,488.62.

"Foreign funds inflow is quite strong. We didn't expect it to be this strong. Positive corporate

and economic results are helping reassure investors of the market's prospects," Oliver Plana, head of sales at Asiasec Equities Inc., said.

The previous biggest single day rise was on Jan 22, 2001 when the market soared 255.13 points or 17.56 percent after former President Joseph Estrada was ousted from power.

"The global arena is awash with cash and so is the local market and right now, the best hedge to inflation seems to be the stock market," said Astro del Castillo of First Grade Holdings.

Inflation rate slowed to 7.1 percent in April from 7.6 percent in March as the rise in prices of food and other items was tem-

STOCKS / A4



ENVOY'S VISIT

US Ambassador Kristie Kenney and PDI Chair Marixi Prieto take note of an amusing point raised over an afternoon snack Friday. Now six weeks into her posting, the envoy, along with officials of the US Embassy, visited the PDI main office in Makati and met with the paper's executives and editors.

REM ZAMORA

PNP says most of killings in media solved

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan
and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

WITH THE ADMINISTRATION REAPING international criticism for the rising number of media murders, the Philippine National Police maintained that most of the cases had been solved although the killers had yet to be convicted.

The PNP yesterday said nearly 60 percent of its recorded cases of media murders since 1986 took place in the last five years under President Macapagal-Arroyo's watch.

Of the 69 recorded murders, 40 occurred from 2001 to the present, while the rest took place from 1986 to 2000, it said.

However, 39 cases, mostly recent ones, were now considered "closed" because the PNP had charged the suspected killers in court, said the police spokesperson, Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao.

Of the 40 media murders since 2001, 30 cases were considered closed, he added.

Pagdilao did not disclose how many cases saw the suspected killers actually convicted and sentenced to a prison term.

PNP SAYS / A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Extreme Northern Luzon and Mindanao will continue to experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening.

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/05/05/06

SOURCE PAGASA

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Second FRONT PAGE

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Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Bagui	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laos	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

18 RP sailors missing off S. Africa

JOHANNESBURG—RESCUE WORKERS ARE increasingly worried about the fate of 26 missing seamen—18 of them Filipinos—whose ship sank off South Africa's southeast coast more than 30 hours ago, according to a search coordinator.

"We continued our search operation through the night but unfortunately we have found nothing," said Maritime Search and Rescue chief Andre Botes yesterday.

"The search will continue throughout the day with ships and an air force C-130 Hercules but we are worried about their safety and weather conditions are deteriorating," he said.

The Alexandros T, sailing from Brazil to China with a load of iron ore, broke up and sank on Wednesday night in heavy seas some 300 nautical miles off the eastern port city of Port Elizabeth.

Seven of the bulk carrier's 33 crew members were rescued on Wednesday and Thursday.

In Manila, acting Labor Secretary Manuel Imson confirmed in

a statement yesterday that six Filipino seafarers had been rescued and were in safe condition.

He named the six as Allan O. Omol, 4th engineer; Aljess F. Miranda, bosun; Lee M. Alemania, deckboy; Elizer B. Paulino, deckboy; Reantonio L. Vergara, deck cadet; and Sherie R. Montano, engine boy, were all crewmembers of the bulk carrier "MV Alexandros T."

The other sailor rescued comes from Romania, said Dimitri Yankakis, the deputy head of mission at the Greek embassy in Pretoria.

But 26 members of the crew, including four Greek citizens who abandoned ship wearing life jackets, were still missing on Friday.

Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Guilberto Asuque said a hotline to the ship's manning agents in

the Philippines, the InterOrient Maritime Enterprises Inc. which hired the crew for the Alexandros, had been established so that families of the missing could be updated.

Botes said the men would be suffering from severe heat loss and would therefore have difficulty attracting the attention of search parties.

"They have been in the water for 33 hours by now," Botes said early on Friday morning. "They are getting into a situation where they won't even be able to attract the attention of those looking for them."

The bulk carrier, which had a gross tonnage of 91,000, sent out a distress signal on Wednesday afternoon saying it was taking in water. It sank a few hours later in stormy seas.

The majority of the crew on the vessel, which was operated by a Greek company and registered in St Vincent and Grenadines, is believed to be from the Philippines. The Philippines is the world's biggest supplier of merchant seafarers.

Manila confirmed yesterday that

18 of the missing men were Filipinos.

Also missing are the captain, his second-in-command and two mechanics, according to the Greek merchant marine ministry in Athens.

Imson directed the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) to coordinate the necessary efforts to assist the seafarers and their families.

He also asked OWWA to facilitate the provision of suitable welfare assistance to the sailors.

Under OWWA rules, documented overseas Filipino workers are entitled to a life insurance of P100,000, an accident insurance of P200,000, disability pay and other benefits as OWWA members.

"We shall ensure that the six rescued seamen are repatriated safely as soon as possible to the Philippines even as we coordinate efforts to monitor the continuing search operations for the missing others," Imson said. *AFP, with a report from Jerome Aning and Alda Franz C. Quodala (trainee).*

Territory issue snags Gov't-MILF peace talks in KL

KUALA LUMPUR—THE PHILIPPINE government and Muslim rebels ended informal peace talks in Malaysia on Thursday without resolving the stubborn issue of territory and jurisdiction over Muslim land.

But at the end of three days of talks aimed at ending nearly 40 years of conflict, the two sides cited progress on issues such as the sharing of natural resources and governance in the Muslim homeland on the southern island of Mindanao.

"It achieved significant progress ... with the exception of territorial delimitation, which was highly technical in nature and requires further deliberation," government negotiators and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) said in a joint statement.

MILF's delegation to the talks was led by Mohagher Iqbal while the government team was headed by chief negotiator Silvestre Afable.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said yesterday they were not able to resolve the issue on territory "particularly the determination and delineation of the areas to be placed under the prospective Bangsamoro entity."

He said the negotiators admitted they needed more data that would "guide them" in re-

solving the issue on territory.

Despite the failure of both sides to reach an agreement, Kabalu said there were significant gains in the talks on the issue of ancestral domain.

"It's a fruitful talk and it would eventually lead to the resolution of the issue," he said.

Kabalu said the three-day discussions held in the Malaysian capital were frank, cordial and showed the intention of both sides to resolve the issue, which is considered the remaining major obstacle to peace between the government and the MILF.

"It advanced the gains already made on the issue of the ancestral domain," Kabalu said.

Under the 2001 Tripoli Agreement, the government agreed to recognize the ancestral domain claim of the Moro people.

Kabalu said that as far as the MILF was concerned, the peace talks "were almost 90 percent complete."

However, both sides did not say when talks hosted by Malaysia would resume. They had hoped to break the deadlock this week and fix a date for the signing of an agreement on ancestral domain, which would pave the way for a final peace pact by September. *Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau and Reuters*

5 suspected NPAs presented in court, charged

By Marlon Ramos

PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

TAGAYTAY CITY—AFTER BEING held incommunicado for almost a week, five suspected members of the New People's Army (NPA) were finally presented in court yesterday and charged with rebellion for allegedly planning to sow terror during the Labor Day celebration.

Charged with rebellion by the police before the sala of Tagaytay City Regional Trial Court Judge Edwin Larida were Aristides Sarmiento, Axel Alejandro Pinpin, Riel Custodio, Rico Ybanez

and Michael Masayes.

It was the first time they were brought out of detention since they were presented to the media in Camp Crame on Monday.

The accused arrived in handcuffs in separate vehicles escorted by a composite police team of the Calabarzon regional police office in Camp Vicente Lim.

Tagaytay assistant prosecutor Ernesto Vida said the police filed an amended complaint to include another person whom he did not identify.

Vida said the accused went under inquest proceedings last

May 2.

But he said no preliminary investigation was conducted after the accused refused to sign a waiver that would have given them a chance to present their counter-affidavits within 15 days.

Militant groups Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) in Cavite and the Kalipunan ng mga Magsasaka sa Kabite (Kamagsasaka-Ka) accused the police and the military of concocting evidence against the five who, they said, were ordinary peasant leaders and civilians.

The police said the accused

were allegedly involved in the plot to grab power and topple the Arroyo administration last May 1.

Chief Supt. Prospero Noble, Calabarzon police director, said the five will be transferred to Camp Crame.

Meanwhile, the families of the five, now referred to as the Tagaytay 5, asked the government to allow them to see their loved ones.

In an e-mailed statement to the INQUIRER, they said the five were not arrested but abducted by police and military operatives on April 28. *With Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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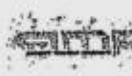
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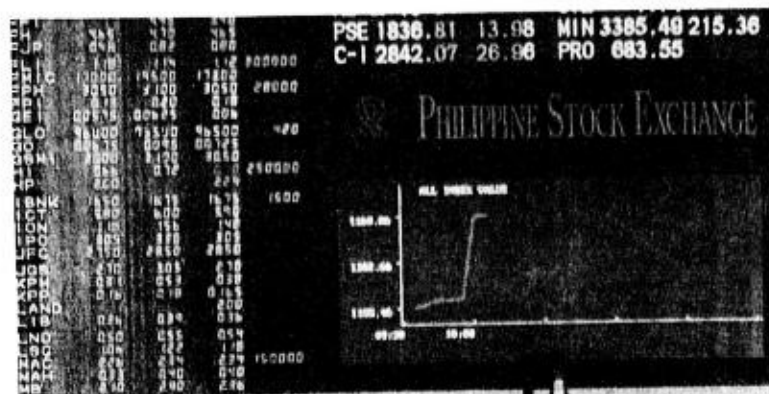
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Stocks post biggest gain in 5 years

From page A1

pered, the National Statistics Office (NSO) said.

"It's a confluence of several factors. Basically it's a matter of people looking at equities again as an attractive investment," Plana said.

Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said that investor sentiment was also boosted by expectations that the economy, as gauged by the gross domestic product, would grow by more than 5.5 percent in the first quarter of the year because of improved performance of the agriculture sector. The 2005 first-quarter growth was 4.6 percent.

Dealers said the market was also buoyed by the decision of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas on Thursday not to raise its overnight interest rates.

"The fact that the central bank did not move overnight interest rates in their policy meeting yesterday may have helped," said Plana.

Plana said the market, now at a fresh seven-year high, may have also gotten a boost from media re-

ports that US pension fund California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) had retained the Philippines in its list of permissible investment destinations.

CalPERS, which is acknowledged as the biggest US pension fund, earlier commissioned Wilshire Associates, one of the world's leading consulting and management firms, to review and guide the pension fund's flow of investments to 27 emerging markets.

In its latest review, Wilshire assigned to the Philippines an average score of "2.13," or 0.13 of a percentage point higher than the "2" threshold rating that Wilshire gave to the Philippines last year.

With the score, the Philippines moved up to 14th in ranking among the 27 emerging markets included in the Wilshire study. The Philippines ranked 18th in the previous study as the country barely made it to the threshold mark.

Paul Joseph Garcia, chief investment officer at ING Investment Management, said foreign inflows surged back into equity markets since Philippine stocks lagged be-

hind other Asian markets.

"Philippine stocks have lagged behind regional equity markets over the past year. Foreign funds have been underweight but with the improving macroeconomic fundamentals, investors are also positioning ahead of quarterly earnings reports," Garcia said.

Francis Lim, president and chief executive officer of the Philippine Stock Exchange, said the dramatic rise in stock prices, especially during the last four trading days, reaffirms investors' confidence on the Philippine economy.

"The economic reforms that the government is putting in place, along with reforms that we at the PSE are implementing, have started to bear fruit," Lim declared.

Lim believes favorable developments in the political front, like the peaceful holding of Labor Day celebrations, have convinced investors of the country's political sobriety.

"Our show of political maturity, combined with sound economic fundamentals, strong

corporate performance and more transparent stock market operations, will definitely fuel a further surge in stock prices," he added. "I believe we have the beginnings here of a bull run, provided, of course, that we maintain all these factors conducive to business."

A total of 3.04 billion shares worth P4.38 billion were traded yesterday.

The broader all-shares index ended up 44.97 points at 1,516.72.

Gainers led declines 59 to 42, with 50 stocks unchanged.

Bank of the Philippine Islands was the top-traded stock, up P4 to P68.50. Its affiliate Ayala Land closed P1.50 higher at P14.75.

Their parent Ayala Corp. rose P27.50 to P430.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone hit a fresh record closing high, adding P65 at P2,125.

San Miguel A shares, open to local investors, were up 50 centavos at P64.50 while San Miguel B shares, available to foreign and local investors, gained P2 to P84. With AFP, Reuters reports

STOCK MARKET hits five year high following yesterday's big gain.

REUTERS

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'Golden Buddha' heirs suffer setback in US suit

From page A1

abuse under Marcos to tap his estate for compensation, said Robert Swift, the Philadelphia-based lead attorney for the class.

Victory is sweet

The lawyer for Roxas' heirs, Dan Cathcart of Los Angeles, said he was considering an appeal.

"This is sweet victory for Filipino victims of human rights abuses," Swift said. "We struggled with scant resources for years to overcome many legal obstacles."

The Philippine government claimed the money belonged to its treasury, but the court said it had no legal right to the account.

Human rights advocate Marie Hilao-Enriquez said the US court's award was a welcome development.

Enriquez, however, said that before the claimants could rejoice, the Philippine government should first distribute their share of the Marcos wealth placed in the national treasury.

Is money gone?

"Why are they dilly-dallying its distribution among the claimants?" Enriquez told the INQUIRER. "Many are saying that the money is already gone as a result of the fertilizer fund scam," she added, referring to the alleged fraudulent allocation of P728 million supposedly for farm inputs in 2004.

Rod Domingo, counsel for the victims, said he and Swift planned to file a motion for the court to order the immediate distribution of the award to the victims.

He said the chief obstacle to the recovery of the Merrill Lynch money was the Philippine government itself which laid claim to it but, according to Domingo, did not offer any proof of ownership.

Government blamed

The government's claim, Domingo said, delayed litigation of the case for many years.

"Despite lack of evidence to support its claim, the government repeatedly sought to prevent a US court from adjudicating the case. It is sad that the Philippine government delayed this litigation for so many years with outrageous claims that the US court ultimately found had no merit," Domingo said.

A \$200-million package promised by the Arroyo administration in the form of a bill to compensate the human rights victims is still pending at the House of Representatives. Reuters, AP with reports from Norman Boradora, Alcuin Papa

IN THE KNOW

In April 1971, soldiers allegedly acting on orders of then President Ferdinand Marcos raided the house of treasure hunter Rogelio Roxas in Baguio City and seized the so-called Golden Buddha, a statue believed to be part of the war loot of Japanese Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita. Roxas purportedly found the statue in a tunnel near Baguio General Hospital in late December 1970.

'Detachable head'

Court records showed the armed men had a search warrant issued by Judge Pio Marcos, an uncle of the late President.

A national furor erupted over the seizure and a statue of Buddha was turned over to the regional trial court in Baguio. Roxas, however, believed that this was a different Buddha, asserting that the three-foot high Buddha he found had a detachable head and a hollow torso, and was filled with gems.

The case soon pitted family against family. Roxas' brother Jose claimed there was no Golden Buddha. Roxas' sons, Henry and Gervic, maintained there existed such statue, adding the Buddha in court custody was a fake.

No Golden Buddha?

In May 1996, Judge Antonio Reyes ruled that there was no Golden Buddha and ordered the release of the statue in court custody to sons Henry and Gervic and brother Jose.

The statue remains at the Justice Hall in Baguio because the feud among the three has not been settled.

In July 1996, a Hawaii jury awarded \$22 billion in damages to Golden Buddha Corp., an Atlanta-based group of investors, over the loss of the Buddha statue. Roxas had turned his claim over to the corporation so that the fight to win back the Golden Buddha would continue even after his death.

Legal fight goes on

Roxas died in Parañaque in May 1993. In November 1998, the Hawaii Supreme Court reversed the 1996 judgment, ruling that the evidence was too speculative to support Roxas' claim.

The Roxas heirs have continued to pursue their legal claim abroad, clinging to hopes that the late treasure hunter's damage suit against the Marcos estate will be resolved.

Kate Pedros, PDI Research

Hunger level among Pinoys ...

From page A1

country hit an all-time high of 16.9 percent in March 2006.

The figure surpassed the previous peak of 16.7 percent recorded in December 2005. Hunger has been on the rise since the end of 2003.

The number of Filipinos going hungry declined from 16.1 percent in March 2001 to the record-low of 5.1 percent in September 2003. Then the hunger pangs started to increase.

Meanwhile, almost 700,000 families or 4.2 percent, reported experiencing severe hunger—defined in the survey as going hungry often or always—in the past three months.

Moderate hunger—defined as experiencing hunger once or a few times in the last three months—was at 12.7 percent translating to roughly 2.1 million families.

Hunger was highest in Mindanao at 21 percent, Visayas registered 16 percent, while hunger in the rest of Luzon was at 14.7 percent.

Metro Manila was ravenous at 18.3 percent. It had reached a record-low of 3.4 percent in March 2004, but then people started

getting famished in the second half of 2004 and then posting a record 21 percent in December 2005.

The SWS Survey also surveyed the public's awareness and personal experience with Tindahan Natin. Some 7 million households or 42 percent said they were aware of the project.

Tindahan Natin provides cheap, good quality rice and noodles through stores jointly identified and endorsed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Barangay Council, the National Food Authority and the City/Municipal Social Welfare and Development Offices.

Meanwhile, about 1.5 million families or 9 percent reported that Tindahan Natin stores were present in their areas, while 4 percent or over 650,000 families reported having bought items from these stores.

The survey was conducted from March 8 to 14 using face-to-face interviews of 1,200 adults divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, with sampling error margins of plus-minus 3 percent for national percentages and plus-minus 6 percent for area percentages.

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NINTH BIGGEST BANK

UnionBank to buy iBank for P13.5B

By Doris C. Dumlaog

THE ABOITIZ GROUP'S UNION BANK of the Philippines is set to buy up to 100 percent of International Exchange Bank for about P13.5 billion, a deal that would lead to a fresh merger and create the country's ninth biggest bank.

UnionBank director and COO of parent conglomerate Aboitiz Equity Ventures Erramon Aboitiz told the INQUIRER last night that the bank signed yesterday afternoon a memorandum of agreement with the major shareholders of iBank to buy a controlling stake in the medium-sized bank.

UBP also disclosed to the Philippine Stock Exchange last night that its board of directors had approved the purchase of at least 67 percent up to 100 percent of iBank's voting shares at P42.50 per share.

The purchase shall be implemented within 30 days and subject to regulatory and other pertinent approvals.

The likely merger between the two medium-sized lenders would shore up UB's assets to about P168 billion and boost its ranking among the country's biggest banks from 13th to 9th, edging out the Yuchengco's Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.

Aboitiz said UB had enough money to pay for the acquisition of iBank.

"The shareholders of UnionBank will not shell out anything. UnionBank will buy from its own resources," he said.

He said that UnionBank saw a "tremendous" synergy with iBank in the retail business, branching and deposit generation.

"We chose iBank because we think the combination is very good. It's very

strong in many areas, like as far as deposit is concerned and their culture is compatible with ours. The strategy of retail accounts is similar to ours. We think it's a well-run bank," Aboitiz said.

He added that UB will make a tender offer to minority shareholders of iBank at the same price.

iBank ranks 17th among the country's biggest banks with assets of about P60 billion as against UnionBank's P108 billion. iBank has about 75 branches while UnionBank has 111 branches.

Among iBank's shareholders are JTKC Equities Inc. (25.82 percent); iVantage Corp. (17.22 percent); Razon Industries Inc. (16.48 percent); Greenhills Properties Inc. (9.34 percent); and, Philippine Realty & Holdings Corp. (8.61 percent).

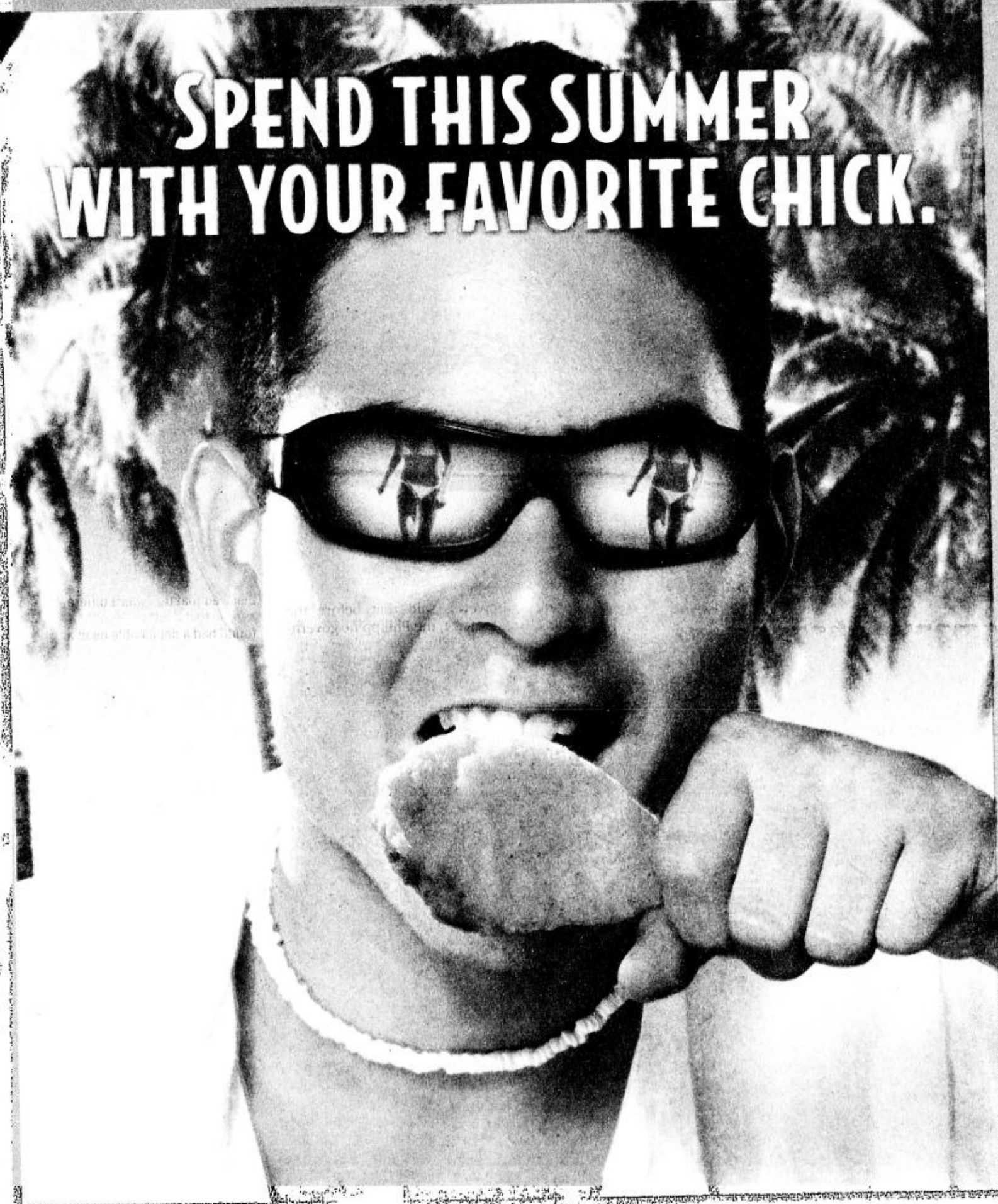
Joseph Roxas, president of Eagle Equities Inc., said it was a good deal for UnionBank, which effectively agreed to pay 1.8 times iBank's book value.

"UnionBank already has a great treasury team. This gives them an opportunity to grow their commercial banking business," Roxas said.

Although UnionBank is the bigger bank, iBank's loan portfolio is more than double at P28 billion versus the UB's P11 billion.

UnionBank, capitalized at P19 billion, earlier attempted to bid for the Philippine National Bank but its offer was matched by the group of tobacco magnate Lucio Tan which exercised its preemptive right as the existing dominant shareholder.

As of end-2005, iBank's return on equity stood at 12.20 percent while UnionBank's ROE was at 14.69 percent during the same period.



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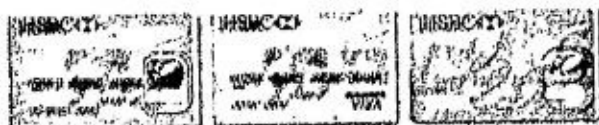
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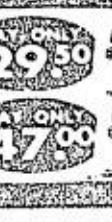
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STILL AT THE BATASAN, members of the Batasan 5 confer with their lawyer, Romeo Capulong, on their next move following a court decision to exclude them from the rebellion charges filed by the government.

Gringo still has influence—Senga

ZAMBOANGA CITY—GREGORIO "Gringo" Honasan can still manage to influence soldiers and officers into joining a plot to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga said on Thursday.

"He still has this level of influence," Senga said, but added that any attempt by Honasan would fail because of the efforts of the AFP hierarchy to counter any such plot.

Among these efforts is the dialogue being conducted with soldiers on the ground, Senga said.

"We know that many of our colleagues in the military have already been enlightened," he said.

Senga visited Zamboanga in time for the anniversary celebration of the Southern Command.

He also went to Sulu and personally listened to the soldiers' sentiments.

But despite his confidence that any overthrow conspiracy involving the military would fail, Senga said the government continued to pursue coup plotters, including Honasan.

Senga said the police and military had fielded agents to track down and arrest the fugitive former senator.

He said that contrary to earlier reports, Honasan was not in Mindanao.

Reports had claimed that Honasan was sighted in certain parts of Mindanao and was being protected by military officers.

Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

PNP says most ...

From page A1

In Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said most of the killings were motivated by things other than the suppression of the freedom of the press.

"We wish to allay fears that these cases are in any way related to the issue of press freedom, which has not in the least been diminished in the Philippines," Bunye said in a statement.

He did not elaborate, but he was apparently referring to the failure of prosecutors to link the deaths of the journalists to their trade.

Bunye said the President had formed a special task force to address the issue.

"We believe the task force has been working competently to solve the other cases in cooperation with the victims' relatives and other media groups," he said.

Culture of impunity

The PNP released its statistics, which vary slightly from other government figures, to refute reports that a "culture of impunity" in the killing of Filipino journalists was in existence.

Earlier, the Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders) branded the Philippines as the second most dangerous country in the world for journalists after Iraq.

It expressed dismay at the lack of arrests, which it attributed to government tolerance of and indifference to the killings, and noted that most of the suspects were powerful politicians, and police and military personnel.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists also gave the same dubious recognition to the Philippines in 2005.

On Wednesday, US Sen. Richard Lugar (Republican), chair of the US Senate committee on foreign relations which investigated cases of violence against the media, called on Ms Arroyo to "thoroughly investigate and prosecute attacks on journalists."

But Pagdila said, quoting PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao: "The PNP strongly denies reports on the alleged existence of a culture of impunity in the killing of journalists in the country, thus making the Philippines the second most dangerous place for journalism."

"Reports on the alleged curtailment of press freedom through media killings in the country are unfounded ... The police has been hot on the trail of those responsible..."

'Instances'

Like Bunye, the PNP pointed out that according to its records, a number of reported media killings were not related to the victims' work as journalists.

Of the 40 recorded victims since 2001, police found that 12 were killed for their other activities.

There are "instances," the PNP said, where the victim was killed for getting involved in illegal drugs or illegal gambling, or where the victim was killed after being implicated in a robbery incident or in land disputes or extortion.

In one case, a journalist was killed for selling a defective *paltik* or improvised revolver, the PNP said.

Another murder involved a case of "thrill killing," according to the PNP.

In another case, the journalist was reportedly killed after having drinks with friends. In yet another case, the journalist was killed after being robbed inside a passenger bus.

The PNP, however, acknowledged an "obvious pattern" in the killings, noting that almost all of the murdered journalists were based in

the provinces and worked in small media outfits.

'Window-dressing'

But Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. cautioned Malacañang against "window-dressing" its report on police action on the media murders.

He pressed the administration to be "transparent" and "truthful" about its steps to solve the killings, pointing out that claims of the high-resolution rate of such crimes had been belied by reports of media organizations.

"The continuing murder of newsmen bespeaks the weak national leadership, ineffective government and corrupt law enforcement agencies," Pimentel said in a statement.

"President Arroyo has lost the moral compass needed to lead the nation. She must now resign so that a snap election can follow," he said.

The senator pointed out that the conflicting reports of law enforcement authorities and the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines on the solution of the killings showed that the administration was not being "forthright about its handling of these cases."

According to the NUJ, only three of the 41 cases of murder reported since Ms Arroyo became President in January 2001 had been solved.

Pimentel said the spate of killings also indicated the administration's low regard for freedom of the press.

"This unflattering tag has brought extreme shame to the Philippines before the international community, costing us dearly in terms of further scaring foreign investors and tourists," he said, referring to the statement of the Reporters Without Borders.

Free flow of info

Lugar raised the importance of the free flow of information in a democracy, which, he said, "depend[ed] on a press free to do its work without government intimidation."

In his statement, Bunye assured Lugar that the Arroyo administration had taken decisive action regarding the media murders.

"Fifteen of the 30 cases cited by the senator have been solved and cases have been filed in courts to punish the perpetrators," Bunye said.

Malacañang apparently attributes to misinformation the US Senate's concern over the increasing number of journalist killings in the Philippines.

"President Arroyo has instructed the Department of Foreign Affairs to work closely with the law enforcement authorities and convey the proper brief on this matter to concerned parties," Bunye said.

Magna Carta

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada yesterday pressed his colleague, Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr., to start public hearings on the proposed Magna Carta for Journalists.

Estrada, who had filed a bill seeking the formulation of the document, said the time was ripe for the passage of such legislation "to protect practicing journalists."

"Journalists are the watchdogs of society whose duty is to expose corruption and abuses in the government and the private sector, and the duty of Congress is to protect the guardians of truth," he said in a statement.

The Magna Carta proposed by Estrada seeks to provide media practitioners protection from violence and harassment as well as guarantee more benefits to their families.

Revilla chairs the committee on public information and mass media.

With a report from TJ Burgonio

Batasan 5 face arrest if they leave House

From page A1

and the resolution granting the motion to strike it out ... The court has no jurisdiction over them, never had jurisdiction over them, so the court has no authority to make any pronouncements over their detention or their choice to seek protective custody."

Upon the advice of their lawyers, the Batasan 5 chose to stay in the House for a few more days, or even weeks, to give themselves time to untangle the legal mess.

"You cannot imprison an idea; you cannot imprison a movement," declared Mariano, who is also national chair of the militant Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

He said it was only right that the rebellion case filed against them on April 21 be junked, "because it was nothing but junk."

Motion to reconsider

Delorino had ruled against the DOJ motion seeking to include the Batasan 5, ex-Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan and 40 others in an earlier rebellion case where only two stood as the accused.

Honasan, an ex-Army colonel who was involved in several bloody coup attempts in the 1980s, is in hiding.

In a 20-page resolution, Delorino ruled that the amended criminal information was in fact new, and thus could not supplant the original case where only Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran and 1st Lt. Lawrence San Juan were charged.

The resolution retained the original information against Beltran, who is detained at Camp Crame, and San Juan, a recaptured member of the Oakwood mutineers.

Yesterday, Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco said he would seek reconsideration of Delorino's resolution as well as her inhibition from the case.

"We will file a motion for reconsideration. The decision of the judge is not an acquittal [of the accused] ... and it's not final and executory. We honestly believe the judge erroneously ruled over the case, with due respect to her," Velasco said.

If Delorino decides to inhibit, a new judge will handle the DOJ appeal, he said.

Delorino herself said she would act on any motion the DOJ would make regarding her resolution. "It's the prosecution's prerogative," she said.

Velasco said the motion was on its way to Delorino's court yesterday afternoon. But it had yet to be filed when the court office closed at 5 p.m.

Police undeterred

De los Santos said the PNP-CIDG was not deterred by the court's decision because the arrest order was based on a DOJ resolution approving the filing of rebellion charges against the Batasan 5.

Neither did the Supreme Court's Wednesday ruling on Presidential Proclamation No. 1017, which pronounced unconstitutional the arrest of protesters, the dispersal of rallies and the raid on the Daily Tribune office, have a bearing on the rebellion case, he said.

"We will act on the standing order of the DOJ," he said. "They will be arrested."

According to De los Santos, police do not



BATASAN SIXTH: Rep. Teddy Casiño plays with his son Elian during a break in their closed-door meeting.

need a warrant to arrest the Batasan 5 because they are accused of rebellion, which has been considered a continuing crime since the communist insurgency began in 1968.

De los Santos suggested that the DOJ file new information before the court.

"I can't dictate on the DOJ but as far as we're concerned, there's a valid basis for [the five lawmakers'] arrest, unless the court orders their release," he said.

The Batasan 5 have asked the Supreme Court for a restraining order on the PNP and the DOJ. But the tribunal has yet to act on the petition.

"In the meantime, the DOJ is not prevented to act. Its resolution stands," De los Santos said.

'Misconception'

The Batasan 5 have been taking refuge at the House since Feb. 27, after the DOJ linked them to the alleged Left-Right plot to overthrow President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The supposed conspiracy prompted Ms Arroyo to declare a weeklong state of emergency on Feb. 24.

Asked to comment on reports that her resolution was tantamount to ordering the release of the Batasan 5, Delorino said: "That's a misconception. Why don't you ask them what's keeping them there?"

She added: "I did not make any ruling as to their current situation. I cannot speak for them. They're there; I don't care why they are there. I have nothing to do with it. The case here has nothing to do with it."

But House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles, who is on vacation in the United States, sent a statement saying Delorino's resolution had effectively trashed the rebellion case.

He said that the Batasan 5 "should now be freed without threat of being arrested," and that the resolution "liberate[d] the House leadership from taking responsibility" over them.

"Protective custody has legally ended with the dismissal of the cases, and they ought to be free to go," Nograles said, adding that it would be "a relief to the House leadership to grant the five lawmakers their freedom."

In a text message sent shortly after Delorino issued her resolution, the Batasan 5 and Beltran said: "We have won the first round of this legal battle. Clearly, there is no case against us and an injustice has been done. We have yet to meet and decide our next moves. Having all the legal and moral basis to get out of this confinement, we will surely take definite steps in pursuing our freedom."

'Not now'

At a hastily called press conference yesterday, Maza said: "When are we coming out? Of course we're coming out, but not now."

She assured reporters that she and her colleagues would not leave the House on the sly and would in fact "announce it to the whole world."

Ocampo denied the deployment of an additional police contingent and the imposition of stricter security measures at the House starting Thursday night.

"That will not happen," he said in denying a planned escape. "We will not give [the authorities] that benefit."

According to Ocampo, the Arroyo administration was saddled with "many setbacks" and was badly in need of a whipping boy.

"[It] might vent on us its ire and frustration over the three recent adverse rulings by the Supreme Court" on Executive Order No. 464, Presidential Proclamation No. 1017, and the calibrated preemptive response policy, he said.

Ocampo said the decision of the Batasan 5 to stay in the House was the most prudent move at this point given the administration's "consistency in disrespecting laws."

Mariano cited a "Proclamation 1017 mentality" that allowed authorities to use "iron-fist and even fascist machinations to trifle with our legitimate rights as individuals and representatives of our constituents."

The militant lawmakers said they would closely study the steps to be taken by the DOJ, lest they be used as "pawns in a political game where the rule of law does not exist."

"We need a short time to study when is the right time to go out," Ocampo said.

Pacquiao in for new fight, throws hat into political ring

From page A1

Pacman's scheduled fight with Mexico's Oscar Larios in July. Pacquiao has hinted that he may try his hand in politics in next year's local elections.

Contrary to rumors, the World Boxing Council super featherweight champion said he would not be running against City Mayor Pedro Acharon Jr.

Acharon is Pacquiao's close friend.

"Mayor Acharon still has one

term. I respect him a lot so I will run in Kiamba first," he told reporters here on Wednesday.

Kiamba, which is in nearby Sarangani province, is the hometown of Pacquiao's wife, Jinky.

"I have been helping people. I want to serve and I want to serve more," the boxing champ said.

But when reporters pressed him to confirm his intention to run for mayor in Kiamba, Pac-

quiao smiled and said: "I am not yet declaring."

Romy Neri, a close aide of Pacquiao, confirmed to the Inquirer that last April, the Filipino ring idol went to the Kiamba municipal Commission on Elections office to register as a voter in the town.

He said the boxing sensation also purchased a property in Kiamba, which is more or less 90 kilometers from here.

Political observers here said

Pacquiao could prove to be a strong contender with his money, popularity and charisma.

Neri said it was incumbent Mayor Danny Martinez of Kiamba who convinced Pacquiao to run for mayor.

He said under the plan, Martinez, who is on his last term as chief executive, would be Pacquiao's running mate.

"It was mayor Martinez who planned the whole thing," Neri said.

RP conquers leprosy but disease stigma remains, says WHO

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE PHILIPPINES HAS CONQUERED leprosy but sadly, not the stigma of the disease.

Despite a low prevalence rate of only 0.49, the disease—particularly how people view it—remains a problem, according to Yohei Sasakawa, the World Health Or-

ganization's goodwill ambassador for leprosy elimination.

Persons with leprosy were probably even more saddled by unfair public perception than those with HIV/AIDS, Sasakawa said.

"[Once you contract] leprosy, you're abandoned by your family and not allowed to return to your community even after you're

cured," he said through an interpreter in a press conference marking the 100th anniversary of Culion Island, the country's foremost facility for leprosy.

Sasakawa, president of Nippon Foundation, has devoted much of his time, traveling around the world assisting patients with leprosy and trying to correct misconceptions about the disease.

The global yardstick prescribed by the WHO for the elimination of leprosy is less than one for every 10,000 persons.

The 0.49 Philippine rate recorded by the WHO was achieved as early as 1998 and falls below the target.

The Department of Health figure of 0.38 two years ago was

even more promising. That year, there were 2,120 cases detected and 3,149 patients cured.

From the medical point of view, leprosy is becoming a thing of the past. But the layman has an entirely different perspective.

"Leprosy has been eliminated but not the social stigma," Kay Yamaguchi, director for interna-

tional programs of the Sasakawa Memorial Health Foundation, told the INQUIRER.

Sasakawa complained that people still considered leprosy as hereditary, or some kind of "divine punishment," and highly communicable.

Although the disease was indeed communicable, he explained that the bacteria was too weak to be spread easily.

Militant youths protest treatment of RP boy in Canada

By Tarra V. Quismundo

SPOONS AND FORKS FROM THE DINING room found their way to the streets yesterday as they were looted by a youth group protesting the "disciplining" of a young Filipino by school officials in Montreal for using a spoon—instead of a knife—during meals.

Instead of clenched fists, some 20 members of militant group Akbayan Youth raised spoons and forks yesterday in a picket in front of the RBCB Plaza on Ayala Avenue in Makati City where the Canadian Embassy maintained offices.

"We want Canadian authorities to sanction school officials for committing racial discrimination and disrespecting cultural diversity when they isolated a Filipino boy for using a spoon and fork," said the group's spokesperson, MJ Bernardo.

The Philippine Embassy in Canada recently reported that Maria Theresa Gallardo, the mother of a 7-year-old boy studying in Roxboro, complained to a local school board that he had been repeatedly scolded by school officials for eating with a spoon, instead of a knife as they wanted him to, during meal times.

She was also reportedly told that if her son "eats like a pig," he had to sit in another table, DFA spokesperson Gilbert Asuque said, quoting from the report.

Philippine Ambassador to Canada Jose Brillantes, in a statement on Thursday, said the embassy was working with outraged Filipinos living in Montreal to pursue the case.

"The embassy considers the alleged incident an affront to Filipino culture," Brillantes said.

Canadian Ambassador to the Philippines Peter Sutherland called it an "isolated incident" that shouldn't hurt bilateral ties. With an AP report.

THE DAILY GOSPEL



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3rd Week of Easter

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Gospel: John 6:60-69

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From the beginning, Jesus knew who would betray him. So he added, "As I have told you, no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father."

After this many disciples withdrew and no longer followed him. Jesus asked the Twelve, "Will you also go away?" Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We now believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Commentary

The Church is at peace! Peter is making journeys, preaching and healing. Tabitha or Dorcas, one of the believers who makes garments, dies in Joppa, and Peter (like Jesus) says to her: "Tabitha, stand up!" And she opens her eyes and stands up. Peter brings in the widows to show that she is alive and many come to believe upon hearing the story. Jesus gives his life in his body and blood, and the disciples find it hard to believe. Many drift and break away from Jesus because they cannot believe in the eucharist. And we—do we believe that the Body and Blood of Christ gives us life? It is life that is meant to be shared and given for the sake of others.

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Aragoncillo admits spying for GMA foes



ARAGONCILLO, shown here in an undated file photo, has pleaded guilty to four counts of espionage.

From page A1

from Aragoncillo but said they did not deal with confidential matters.

Aragoncillo's public defender, Chester M. Keller, said his client never intended to harm the United States and never received any money for his efforts.

"It was his sole intention to help the people of the Philippines," Keller said.

Jail instead of death

The most serious charge, conspiracy to transmit national defense information, can carry the death penalty. But under a plea agreement, Aragoncillo faces 15 to 20 years in prison. Sentencing was scheduled for Aug. 14.

US Attorney Christopher J. Christie said outside court that the government did not seek the death penalty because no physical harm resulted from the leaked information.

However, Christie said: "It was information that had the potential to compromise US national security."

Aragoncillo, an ex-Marine and former FBI intelligence analyst, worked as a military aide to Vice Presidents Al Gore and Dick Cheney starting in 1999. After retiring from the Marines, he became a civilian employee of the FBI, working at Fort Monmouth in central New Jersey.

Estrada denial

He was arrested in September, along with Michael Ray Aquino, a former Philippine police official who is accused of passing information from Aragoncillo about Filipino leaders to current and former political officials in the Philippines.

Estrada last week denied suggestions by US prosecutors that he conspired with Aragoncillo to overthrow Ms Arroyo.

Aquino, a Filipino living in New York, pleaded not guilty in October to an indictment charging him with conspiracy and acting as an unregistered foreign agent. His lawyer, Mark A. Berman, said Aquino did not know that the material he received from Aragoncillo was classified.

By e-mail, fax and phone

Under questioning by Assistant US Attorney Karl H. Buch, Aragoncillo admitted taking dozens of documents from White House and FBI computers and passing them by hand, e-mail, fax and telephone.

One question asked if he knew that a document he took in February 2005 from an FBI computer contained "national defense information relating to terrorist threats to US military personnel in the Philippines."

As with all the questions, Aragoncillo answered, "Yes, sir."

Meeting at Malacañang

He admitted in court to passing on documents classified as top secret, secret and confidential that included information relating to terrorist threats against US government interests and military personnel in the Philippines.

The US Department of Justice said Aragoncillo also admitted he met the alleged co-conspirators at the Malacañang Palace in January 2001.

Prosecutors called his guilty admission a "plea agreement" but refused to say if he would testify against co-defendant Aquino.

The case has caused a political scandal in the Philippines because the stolen documents allegedly were used by opponents of Ms Arroyo to try to oust her.

Four counts

Prosecutors named Estrada, Lacson and Fuentebella as unindicted co-conspirators in the plot.

Aragoncillo "took an oath to protect his country (as a Marine) and instead decided to betray his country," said Christie. "He took information that was very sensitive to our national security."

Aragoncillo pleaded guilty to four counts.

One charged him with conspiracy to transmit national defense information, the second with transmitting national defense information.

The third charge was unlawful retention of national defense information and the fourth unlawful use of a government computer.

Aragoncillo would face the death penalty if it was found the information he gave led to the death of an intelligence source. The justice department said that was "not present" in Aragoncillo's case.

A department statement said Aragoncillo admitted that his espionage activity continued during his time as an FBI analyst.

"Aragoncillo admitted that he regularly transferred to his Philippine contacts national security documents classified as 'Secret,' and that the information could be used to the injury of the United States or to the advantage of a foreign nation," the statement said.

The information was allegedly leaked between October 2000 and February 2002.

"His betrayal is profound and a disservice to his country," Christie said.

The White House had no comment on the plea. *AP, Reuters, Agence France-Presse*

Erap et al. could face rebellion raps—DOJ

From page A1

"We will file rebellion charges against them if we can make a linkage between the admission (of Aragoncillo) and the plot to oust the President from office," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez disagreed with a statement by Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor that politicians linked to the Aragoncillo case could be charged with treason, pointing out that treason "is a war crime."

He said that Estrada, Lacson and the others were "in trouble" if Aragoncillo indeed implicated them in the espionage operation.

He said that if those named by Aragoncillo were eventually indicted in the United States, it would be logical for the US authorities to seek their extradition.

Won't oppose extradition

"We will not object to their extradition. We have to honor the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty," he said. "But these people can certainly resist by resorting to legal process by asking for evidence."

Defensor said it was important for the government to obtain documents and other evidence used in the Aragoncillo case in the United States that would show conspiracy with politicians in the Philippines.

He said the government would await the final resolution of the Aragoncillo case before taking legal action against the conspirators.

The objective of getting such documents and evidence was to find out what were the plans of the conspirators and when they intended to grab power, he said.

US notices

Last February, the US Embassy in Manila, through the Department of Justice, notified former President Estrada and his son, San Juan Mayor Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito, that the US government had tapped their telephone conversations and electronic communication during its investigation of Aragoncillo.

The legal notices served on the Estradas stated that the US government intercepted their wire and/or electronic communications between Aug. 22 and Sept. 12, 2005.

Lacson also got a legal notice from the US government last December but Lacson said he was just informed that his e-mail account had been found in a laptop seized from Aquino.

Estrada, in a phone talk with the INQUIRER, said the information that came from Aragoncillo was delivered to him by a common friend and stressed he did not ask for it.

Others got same info

He said the same information reached other people, including Defensor himself, Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, and Sen. Aquilino Pimentel.

Estrada said he met Aragoncillo during an official trip to the United States and they became friends.

"There was no sensitive or classified information there. There was nothing there that others didn't know," Estrada said in Filipino.

Mayor Ejercito said he saw no reason to worry about Aragoncillo pleading guilty of passing classified information to politicians in the Philippines.

No control

"We were just recipients of e-mails. People can send me e-mails anytime. I cannot control that," Ejercito said.

He said the information e-mailed to him "could not even be considered classified" and that it was "the same information we get from newspapers."

He said he was prepared for the administration using the issue against him and his family.

"The administration grabs every opportunity. They will always blame us (for all their problems)," Ejercito said.

"I feel sorry for him (Aragoncillo). His biggest crime is he still had concern for this country. He still loves this country," Ejercito added.

Is US spying?

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero cautioned the administration against filing rebellion charges against opposition members linked to the Aragoncillo case.

Escudero said charging them would be premature unless it was shown that they actually received classified information from Aragoncillo and that this was damaging to the government.

But then that would also imply that the US government was digging up dirt against the Arroyo administration, he added.

"It does not follow logic unless the US is plotting against our government. Are the Americans also plotting with the opposition to oust the government?" he added.

With reports from Christine O. Avedaño, Nelson F. Flores, Edson C. Tandoc Jr., Philip C. Tabeza and TJ Burgonio

Department of Environment and Natural Resources
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NOTICE OF APPLICATION POLA MINING CORPORATION MINERAL PRODUCTION SHARING AGREEMENT

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to Section 76 of DENR Administrative Order (DAO) No. 96-40, Series of 1996, the Revised Implementing Rules and Regulation of Republic Act No. 7942, otherwise known as the "Philippine Mining Act of 1995", POLA MINING CORPORATION, with registered address at AMA Building II, No. 59 Panay Avenue, Quezon City, Philippines, has filed an application/proposal for Mineral Production Sharing Agreement for the exploration, development and utilization of gold and other minerals resources and particularly described as follows:

- Registration No. **APSA No. 00092-JX**
- Date of Registration: **February 21, 2003**
- Area Location: **Brgy. Plakan, Municipality of Sirawal, Province of Zamboanga del Norte**

IV. Technical Description of the Area

POINT	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
01	7° 30' 00"	122° 05' 45"
02	7° 30' 30"	122° 05' 45"
03	7° 30' 30"	122° 05' 00"
04	7° 31' 00"	122° 05' 00"
05	7° 31' 00"	122° 05' 00"
06	7° 30' 45"	122° 06' 00"
07	7° 30' 45"	122° 07' 30"
08	7° 31' 30"	122° 07' 30"
09	7° 31' 30"	122° 06' 30"
10	7° 32' 00"	122° 06' 30"
11	7° 32' 00"	122° 06' 45"
12	7° 32' 30"	122° 06' 45"
13	7° 32' 30"	122° 07' 00"
14	7° 33' 00"	122° 07' 00"
15	7° 33' 00"	122° 07' 30"
16	7° 33' 30"	122° 08' 00"
17	7° 33' 30"	122° 08' 30"
18	7° 34' 00"	122° 08' 30"
19	7° 34' 00"	122° 10' 30"
20	7° 31' 30"	122° 10' 30"
21	7° 31' 30"	122° 09' 30"
22	7° 30' 00"	122° 09' 30"

Exception-The proposed Contract Area shall be subject to Section 19 of R.A. 7942 and Section 15 ("Area Closed to Mining Location") and Section 16 ("Ancestral Land") of DENR Administrative Order No. 96-40 Series of 1996. Among other things:

- The following shall also be closed to mining locations: areas with valid and existing mining rights, existing mining applications, and areas expressly prohibited by laws;
- The following shall also be closed to mining location except upon written consent of the concerned government agency or private entity subject to the evaluation and validation by the Bureau; areas near or under public infrastructure or highways, waterways, railroads, reservoirs or private building, cemeteries archaeological and historical sites, bridges, dams or other infrastructures projects, public or private works including plantations or valuable crops;
- Application for mineral agreement or financial assistance agreement covering small scale mining areas, civil or military reservations, areas covered by Certificate of Ancestral Domain claims or areas of ancestral land as may be defined by law shall require prior written consent of concerned individuals, groups or other government agencies having jurisdiction over the area as applied for;

- Size of the Area: **4,131.00 has.**
- Duration of the Permit:
 - Exploration Period: shall have term of two(2) years renewable for another two(2) years each but in no case exceed a total of eight(8) years;
 - Total duration of the agreement shall be twenty-five(25) years from the date of execution, subject to renewal for another period not to exceed twenty-five(25) years under the same terms and condition subject to changes mutually agreed upon by both parties and provided further, that such terms and conditions are not consistent with law and do not prejudice the principle of sustainable development.

VII. Extent of Operation to be Undertaken

Development

Construction and Utilization

Any and all persons having adverse claims, protest and/or opposition to the above mentioned application(s) are hereby notified that their adverse claims should be filed within thirty(30) days from the last date of publication/posting, directly either the Regional Office concerned or through any concerned Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) or Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) of DENR for filing in the Regional Office for purpose of its resolution by the Panel of Arbitrators and/or the concerned appellate body(ies), pursuant to the provision of Republic Act 7942 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Adverse claims, protest or opposition should be accomplished in accordance with section 203 and 204 of DENR Administrative Order 00-40, Series of 1996 and copy thereof shall be furnish to the application/contractor by adverse claimant.

For further particulars, apply or course your inquiries to the The Regional Director, Mines and Geosciences Bureau, Regional Office No. IX, 2nd fl. G.L. Bldg., Veterans Avenue, Zamboanga City

(Sgd.) **CONSTANCIO A. PAYE JR.**
Regional Director

(PDI - May 6 & 13, 2006)

GMA to drop by Macau for wedding on way to Saudi

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO will make a surprise visit today to Asia's casino capital, Macau, before flying off tomorrow to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for a four-day state visit.

The President is a principal sponsor in the wedding of Trade and Industry Undersecretary Carissa Vera-Cruz and businessman Juju Evangelista to be held this afternoon.

Cruz is the daughter of Gina Vera Perez de Venecia from her first marriage with construction magnate Philip Cruz. Evangelista is the owner of Toshiba Medical Equipment among other firms.

The President also attended the couple's civil wedding in Manila recently.

First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo will accompany the President in her trip to Macau and Saudi Arabia.

The President is set to visit Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam to discuss the troubling oil situation

with Saudi officials and seek the kingdom's support for the Philippines' bid to obtain an observer status in the Organization of Islamic Conference.

The President will hold talks with Saudi King Abdullah ben Abdulaziz Al-Saud which are expected to lead to the expansion of trade ties and energy cooperation between the two countries.

As customary during her trips abroad, Ms Arroyo will also touch base with the Filipino community in Saudi.

Included in the President's delegation are Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Trade and Industry Secretary Peter Favila, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Rep. Alipio Cirilo Badelles, Lanao del Sur Rep. Benasing Macarambon Jr., Lanao del Norte Rep. Abdullah Dimaporo, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan, and special envoy to Saudi Arabia Antonio Villamor.



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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

- The West Visayas State University Medical Center (WVSUMC) through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) invites bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for Supply, Delivery and Installation of One (1) lot of Radiologic/Diagnostic Equipment namely:
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 - Ultrasound Machine, 4 probes w/ 4D (1 set)
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 - Conventional X-Ray Machine, 500 MA, 150KV (1 set)
 - R/F X-Ray Machine, 800 MA, 150KV (1 set)
 on a lease-to-own scheme for a fixed term of five (5) years.
- A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Interested Bidders from WVSUMC Supply Office and upon payment of nonrefundable fee in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos Only (P5,000.00) to the West Visayas State University Medical Center Cashier. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
- The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

BAC Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	May 15-17, 2006
2. Pre-bid Conference	May 18, 2006; 9 AM, Conference Room
3. Opening of Bids	May 30, 2006; 9 AM, Conference Room

4. Submission of Bids shall be on May 30, 2006 not later than 9:00 AM at WVSUMC, Conference Room, Ground Floor. The eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposals will be opened immediately in the presence of Bidder's representatives who choose to attend.

5. All particulars relative to eligibility, bidding, and evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

6. WVSUMC reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not to award the contract for any justifiable and reasonable ground where the award of the contract will not redound to the benefit of the Government, and WVSUMC shall not be liable whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of this bid.

(Sgd.) **ANNA VICTORIA J. SOMBONG, M.D.**

BAC-Chairman

(PDI-April 29 & May 6, 2006)

Gonzalez admits SC rulings clipped GMA powers

By Armand N. Nocum

JUSTICE SECRETARY RAUL GONZALEZ admitted yesterday that the decision of the Supreme Court on the three controversial edicts of the President effectively clipped her powers to address future security and economic crises.

With the court's ruling on Presidential Proclamation No. 1017—which places the country under a state of national emer-

gency—the President's power to take over vital industries had been rendered "inutile."

"It definitely affected [Ms Arroyo's power] to the point that it might become 'inutile,'" Gonzalez said of the court's ruling on Section 17, Article XII of the Constitution, which grants the President the power to take over public utilities.

"If you follow the Supreme Court ruling, the President must always ask Congress for emer-

gency powers. But the question is how fast or how slow can Congress act," he said.

He said the government would definitely file a motion for reconsideration and would ask the court to reverse its ruling.

Gonzalez also denied that the government had lost three cases. He claimed that the court's ruling on Executive Order 464—which stopped Cabinet men from attending congressional hearings with-

out the President's say so—"was a draw." The Palace also "won 100 percent" in the case of the calibrated preemptive response (CPR) policy, which the court declared as partly constitutional.

Thus, he said it would be unfair for people to call for the resignation or expect apologies from Cabinet men who had advised the President on the three measures.

"I don't think we failed the President," Gonzalez said, adding

that the decision on the three edicts was reached by the Cabinet as a whole, with the President giving the final imprimatur.

But in view of the court's decisions, he said the Palace is looking into the decisions to guide it in its future actions.

"Malacañang is studying the implications of these because at the end of the day, you have to follow the decisions of the Supreme Court," Gonzalez said.



GONZALEZ: We will appeal decision

2008 DEADLINE

DAR fasttracks distribution of 600,000 has. under CARP

By Blanche S. Rivera

WITH BARELY TWO YEARS TO GO BEFORE the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program expires in 2008, the Department of Agrarian Reform has ordered its field officers nationwide to fasttrack the distribution of the remaining 600,000 hectares of lands identified for CARP coverage.

In a memorandum issued to regional directors and provincial agrarian reform officers (PAROs) on April 21, Agrarian Reform Undersecretary Narciso Nieto Jr. has ordered the issuance of notices of coverage (NOC) on these lands.

"Since you have already verified that certain landholdings are coverable under CARP, proceed with the issuance of NOC covering all lands, regardless of whether or not they are included in the current year's target," Nieto said.

Nieto said all private landholdings that have been validated as "coverable" under CARP would be issued NOC even if the government can only start actual coverage of the lands after 2006.

The issuance of the NOC signals the beginning of the official land acquisition and distribution process, according to the DAR.

Nieto, DAR field operations chief, also ordered the regional and provincial officers to formally inform the concerned Register of

Deeds of the NOC to bar any other transactions or annotations on the landholdings' titles.

The DAR has acquired and distributed some 3.6 million hectares of the target 4.2 million hectares of private landholdings identified for CARP.

Between 400,000 to 600,000 hectares are left for distribution by 2008. This year, the target for coverage is 130,000, according to Nieto.

The DAR, however, expects strong resistance from the owners of the remaining landholdings, which are considered to be the most problematic.

These lands are located mostly in Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Quezon and Camarines Sur. Landowners in these provinces have asked the courts to either defer or exempt their lands from CARP coverage.

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Parents assail GMA for breaking vow

DISAPPOINTED PLAN-holders of troubled pre-need firm Pacific Plans Inc. (PPI) lashed out at President Macapagal-Arroyo for breaking her promise to help them.

Philip Piccio, president of the Parents Enabling Parents Coalition (PEP Coalition) said Arroyo might have only been paying "lip service" to over 1 million affected students when she promised to divert P1 billion from the Government Service Security Insurance System (GSIS) to help victims of failed pre-paid educational plans.

He said some 150,000 students and planholders will not

be able to enroll in June if the problem of the pre-need industry is not solved.

In a televised roundtable discussion, Ms Arroyo said "legal issues" had prevented the Palace from using GSIS money to help planholders.

Last year, the President promised to allocate P1 billion to state universities and colleges so they could accommodate students with failed educational plans.

But GSIS president Winston Garcia said government rules did not allow the transfer of GSIS funds to any institution without the consent of Congress.

Alcun Papa

8-day candlelight vigil vs Cha-cha begins today

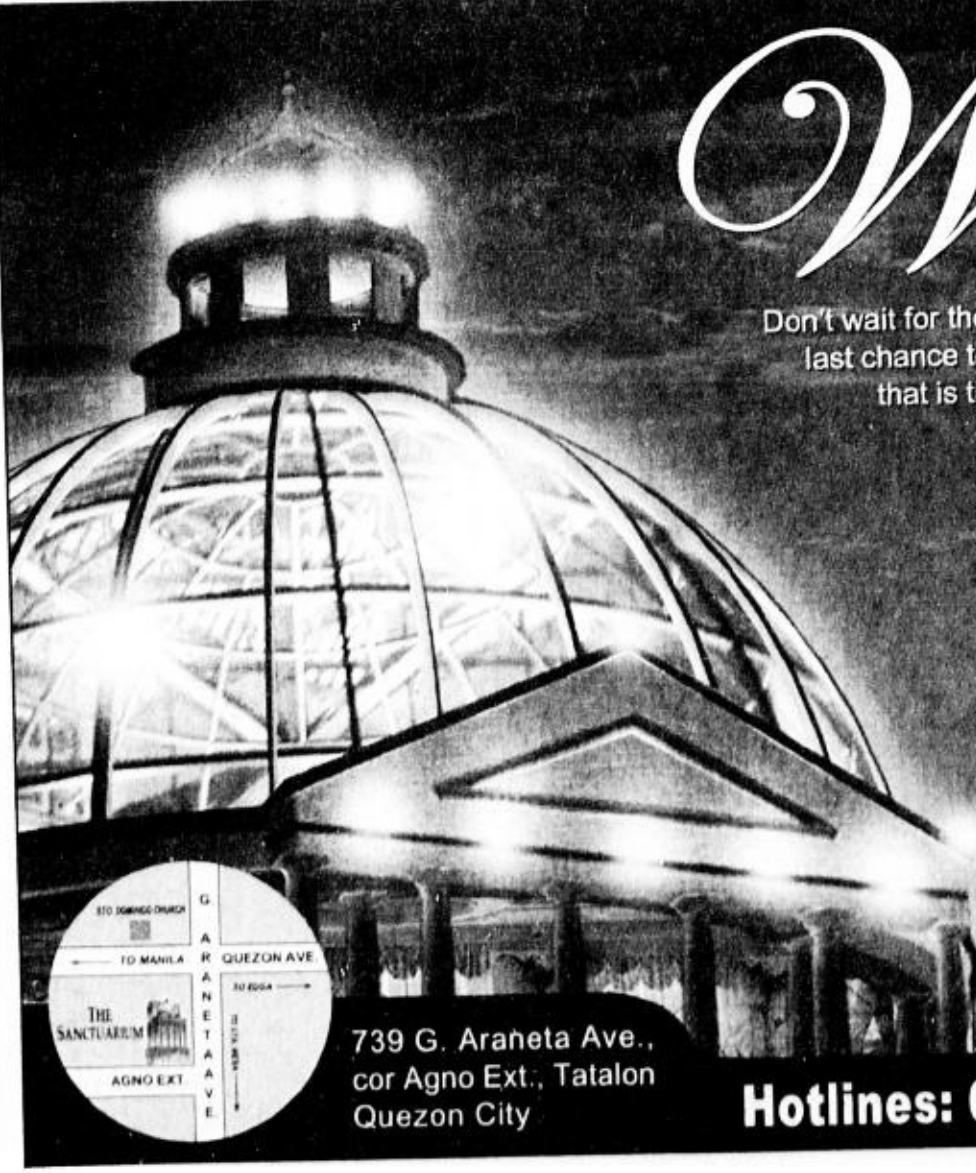
MEMBERS OF A Citizens' group will start tonight an eight-day candlelight vigil outside their homes to show opposition to Charter change and to press for electoral reforms.

Those on the road are asked to turn on their car blinkers from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., according to the National Action for Political Renewal and Stability (Napras).

The vigil ends on May 13 with a "Non-violent Candlelight Citizens' Assembly" at the Quezon Memorial Circle from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Participants are requested to come in white and bring candles, rosaries or other objects suitable to their faith, and trash bags.

Napras is an inter-faith coalition made up of the Kapatiran sa Pangkalahatang Kabutihan, the Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines.



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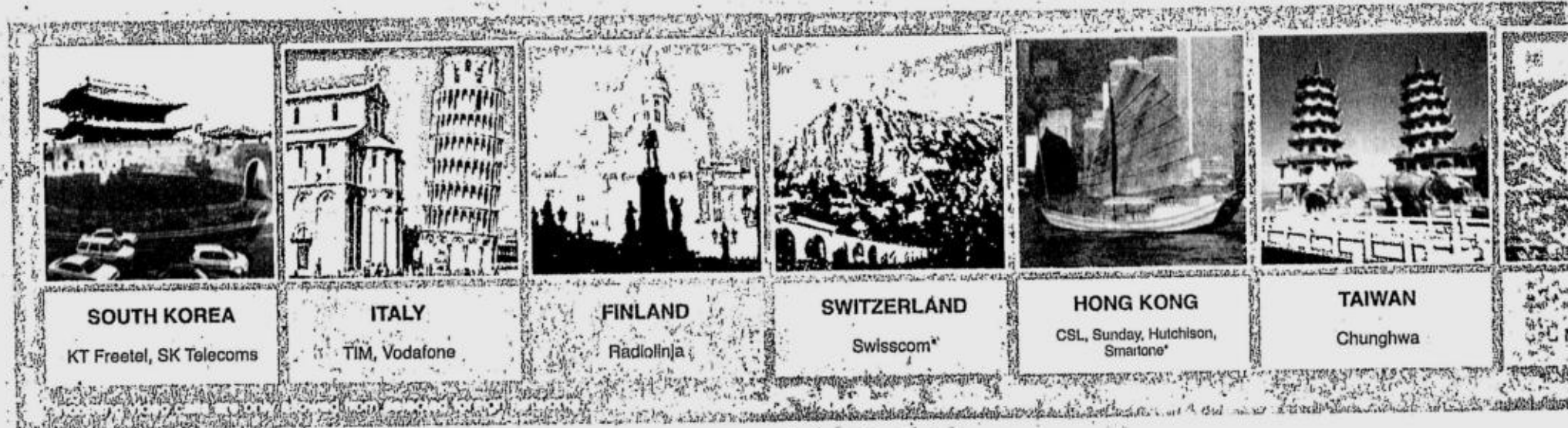
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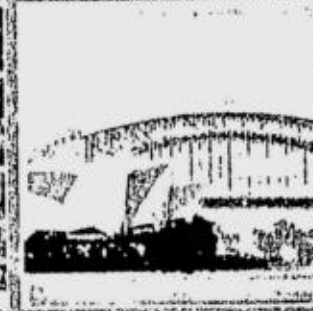
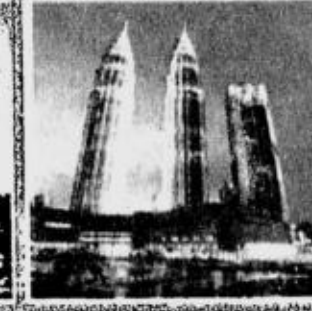
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Public interest

WHERE THERE IS A CONFLICT BETWEEN PUBLIC interest and private need, there should be no question as to which must prevail. But obviously, even to a congressman like Edcel Lagman of Albay, this basic principle of public governance is not clear. He insists that a 58-hectare housing project located inside the 2,700-hectare La Mesa watershed should be allowed to proceed for the benefit of 1,411 employees of the National Waterworks and Sewerage Administration (Nawasa)—now, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS)—and their families.

The families were awarded the rights to the land in 1968 as part of a collective bargaining agreement. However, the present location of the project is not the original one. The CBA-designated site was in San Jose, Bulacan, outside the La Mesa watershed. But the implementation of the project was delayed because succeeding Nawasa and MWSS administrators, concerned with the project's possible adverse impact on Metro Manila's water supply, contested the validity of the agreement. On Jan. 17, 1975, the Supreme Court ruled that "there was absolutely nothing which remained to be done except the execution of the sale."

The following year, President Ferdinand Marcos ordered that the original site be used for a new filtration plant. Thus the housing project was transferred to La Mesa. "The deal ... was consummated with the turnover of the absolute deed of sale to the claimants in March 2006," noted Save the La Mesa Dam Coalition, which is opposing the project, not "per se" but only its location. A proposal to relocate the project was said to have been rejected by the awardees.

If the project is carried out in its present site, not only will it destroy a substantial portion of the La Mesa forest, it will also compromise the safety of the drinking water of the National Capital Region and, therefore, the health of its 12 million residents, those opposing the project warn. But Lagman is adamant, which looks rather strange. He is reportedly giving the awardees free legal advice, but the project is not even in his district in Albay. He has assured the public that "engineering mitigating measures" would be installed "to foreclose possible pollution of the La Mesa Dam and prevent the despoliation of the area." But we didn't know that pollution-control is one of his fields of expertise.

On the other hand, a 2004 study, conducted by the UP-based National Hydraulic Research Center, concluded: "There was no mitigating measure we could recommend for the possible spill of toxic materials into the reservoir." The study recommended: "It will be in the best interest of the MWSS and the general public, who will eventually utilize the water in the La Mesa Reservoir for drinking, that the 58 hectares remain a protected watershed and not be converted to a housing project."

On TV, Lagman has been invoking the 1975 decision of the high court. In other forums, he has appealed to the public's humanitarian instincts. "Many of the awardees are now infirm while others have passed away," he said.

But is the high court's decision cast in stone so that it can never be revoked? Bantay Kalikasan operations manager, John Paul Balayon points out that there's a maxim in law that says that "when the circumstances in which a judgment was made have drastically changed by the time that judgment is to be implemented, that prior decision can at least be revisited or at best totally challenged."

Retired Justice Ramon Mabutas of the Court of Appeals has opined that the "prevention of harm to the public, which such a takeover (of the housing project) seeks to accomplish, is as valid a reason as any" for the state to exercise the power of eminent domain.

Is sentimentalism a valid reason to compromise the health and welfare of 12 million Filipinos in favor of 1,411 families? Do the benefits that will accrue to the families justify the risk to the entire Metro Manila populace?

Happily, the awardees seem to be open to the idea of moving the project to a safer site. If true, they are more sensible than their legal adviser. The awardees, notwithstanding Lagman's advice, apparently appreciate the principle that the public interest should be put above private need.



Divided loyalty

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

and allegiance. A person should have the right to choose his own nationality and this choice should be honored by all countries. However, he should not be entitled to claim more than one nationality."

Congress did not think so when it passed the bill that became the Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act of 2003. Its sponsors had rejected the argument that it would violate the constitutional policy against dual allegiance, saying that it was different from dual citizenship, which was perfectly lawful. President Macapagal-Arroyo agreed when she signed the measure into law, and the Supreme Court later concurred.

In *Mercado v. Manzano*, 307 SCRA 630, the petitioner challenged the respondent's title as vice mayor of Makati City, claiming that as a Filipino-American he was covered by Sec. 40 of the Local Government Code disqualifying dual citizens from local elective offices.

The Supreme Court adverted to the debates in the Constitutional Commission of 1987 on the distinction between dual citizenship and dual allegiance. It sustained the former and rejected the latter. It held that Manzano could not be guilty of dual allegiance because he had effectively renounced his dual nationality in his certificate of candidacy for the disputed office. In other words, he had become exclusively a Filipino citizen.

The decision did not categorically say that dual citizenship necessarily imports dual allegiance, which Rep. Act No. 9225 impliedly al-

lows and in fact even encourages although it "is inimical to the national interest" according to Art. IV, Sec. 5 of the Constitution.

A citizen owes exclusive loyalty to his country but not under this dubious law which allows a natural-born Filipino to retain or reacquire his Philippine citizenship while also retaining his loyalty to the country where he has been naturalized. As a dual citizen, he is allowed to divide his loyalty between the country of his birth and the country of his choice.

This is the inexcusable infidelity that all the three major departments of the government—Malacañang, Congress and the Supreme Court—have expressly recognized and knowingly condoned. They have all categorically affirmed that a dual citizen may owe part of his loyalty to his adopted country instead of offering his total and exclusive allegiance to the Philippines.

Commissioner Fernandez said, "I cannot for the life of me understand why Congress passed RA 9225 despite the constitutional ban against 'dual allegiance.' It turns out now that this law is 'inimical to the national interest' and should be dealt with accordingly, i.e., slain and struck down as unconstitutional."

Let me repeat what I said in this column against "the cloying sentimentality of Congress in allowing Filipinos to retain or reacquire their natural-born citizenship after purposely and formally abandoning it. What is worse is that we generously permit them at the same time to continue their allegiance to their adopted foreign country and thus dilute their loyalty to their forsaken but forgiving Philippines."

Rep. Act No. 9225 belittles patriotism and reduces it to an alien accommodation. It compromises love of country, which must be a singular and unalloyed devotion, with material convenience in another land.

A run of good luck

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

stration, but all those starting from 1985—for not implementing Section 15 that requires the designation of at least one suitable freedom park or plaza in every city and municipality of the country. It ordered the interior secretary to do so within 30 days, after which "no prior permit shall be required to exercise the right to peaceably assemble and petition in the public parks or plazas of a city or municipality that has not yet complied."

The other side of the coin, however, is that complying with that provision also provides local government executives with the justification to refuse to allow demonstrations to take place where public convenience and safety might be compromised (e.g., major thoroughfares) because the freedom parks present an alternative location. More shades of Solomon.

The same balancing act was performed by the Court in deciding on Presidential Proclamation 1017 and General Order 5. Some parts of both were considered constitutional (victory for the executive): in PP 1017, the call by the President on the AFP to prevent or suppress lawless violence, the declaration of national emergency; and in GO 5, the provision of a standard by which the AFP and the PNP should implement PP 1017, i.e. whatever necessary and appropriate actions and measures to suppress and prevent acts of lawless violence. Other parts were declared unconstitutional (victory for the petitioners): the takeover of privately owned utilities or business interests without prior legislation under the national emergency

declaration; the portion of GO 5 which deals with "acts of terrorism" as these have not yet been defined; warrantless arrests without proof that the arrested were committing acts constituting lawless violence; and the imposition of standards or prior restraint on the media. In other words, PP 1017 doesn't give carte blanche to the authorities. Only one justice dissented: Dante Tinga.

Why can these three decisions be considered "good luck" for us? Two important reasons: One is that they have shown the independence of the Court, belying any suspicions that it is a presidential rubber stamp, packed as it were by her appointees (two of the three ponentes are her appointees). Second is that they also make mincemeat of the claims that there is a state of "undeclared" martial law, or that what the country is undergoing under the Arroyo watch is worse than martial law.

The fourth "good luck" sign? Two weeks ago, this column discussed a March 28 high court resolution, which was not-too-respectfully likened to a "mountain that labored and brought forth a mouse." Not so, after all. Responding to a Motion for Clarification, the Court clarified that the resolution must be read in conjunction with the Constitution, the law and decided cases. And doing so shows that if a mouse was produced, it is one that roars. To make a long story short, that seemingly innocuous resolution actually means that the Office of the Ombudsman has until June 30 of this year to make up its mind about the criminal culpability of the Commission on Elections in the computerization case. If it so finds, then it must report to the Court every three months on the status of the prosecution of such criminal case up to its final disposition. No wonder the Comelec has come out with newspaper ads defending itself.

It's about time the Filipino people got some really good news. God and the Supreme Court willing, the run of "luck" will continue.

Where are the poor?

COMMENTARY

Denis Murphy

MANY HAVE NOTICED THE POOR ARE NOT attending the present political discussions and rallies. This is not good, they believe, because without the poor the rallies are weak.

But why are the poor absent? Some civil society leaders say the poor have first to be educated on the pros and cons of the issues and then they'll come. Others fear the poor may have completely different priorities, or have lost faith in all the current leaders.

In an attempt to find the beginnings of an answer, I attended an urban poor people's workshop on the Cha-cha barangay initiative. Chito Gascon, former undersecretary of the Department of Education, was the main speaker.

The first people I talked with were two young mothers from Daang-Tubo, Quezon City: Lisa Elinida, 24, married with three children and Melanie Juntilo, 19, married with two children. Each nursed a baby as we talked.

After some introductions, I asked them what Cha-cha was. They thought a while, then Lisa said, "A dance?" Later she said Cha-cha was a program of the President for jobs.

Their husbands are unemployed. They survive by borrowing food and money from their neighbors and by scavenging when they can for plastics and metals. I asked about food: for example, what they ate at night. They said they often have no food at night, so they drink water and try to sleep. These are the exact words told me just a few days earlier by a woman in the government relocation center in Cabuyao, Laguna. The two women buy bread when they can, and if they have P2 they buy Dimples (a fish-flavored cracker, a junk food).

The two babies looked malnourished. A medical person with me said one of the babies should be twice its weight. They are nice-looking babies, but very frail and they don't move around or move as quickly as well-fed children. Melanie's baby has a sore near his eye. The medical person asked her what it was, and was told "chicken

pox." "No money for a doctor," Lisa explains.

Melanie also lacks a place to sleep. She, her husband and her two children sleep outside on some chairs. There was a certain sadness in the babies' faces, I thought, and they're not yet one year old.

"What do you want the government to do?" I asked.

"Give us jobs so we can eat."

Cha-cha, it seems, is not a concern for the poor. Their concern for jobs and food dominates their lives like the blazing sun dominates our summer days.

"Does God want people to be hungry?" I asked. "No, it's the bad leaders who are corrupt and steal, not God. We believe in God. It's bad leaders."

Seventy-five percent of urban poor will answer this way. They know more about God's ways than they do of Cha-cha.

They feel, despite their problems, that they are better off than they would be in their home provinces in Bicol and Leyte. "There," Lisa explained, "if you don't have money or fish, you do not eat. No one can share with you, because everyone is poor. In Manila, you can borrow and you can scavenge."

"Are you happy with life?"

"Mahirap-masaya," Melanie says.

"Masaya na masaya," Lisa says with conviction.

I think that if I can understand this attitude in the face of dire poverty, I can understand the poor.

I interviewed Maricris Yamasirap, 20, single and

unemployed. She lost her job as a security guard. She lives by herself. "I borrow from my friends to buy bread. That's all I eat. Look at me, I used to be mataba. Now I'm so thin. Look at me." She holds up her arm, which is as thin as a child's.

"What do you want our government to do?" I asked.

"We want GMA out. We're hungry."

Antonia Bolani, an older woman, who has listened to Maricris, says her husband doesn't work, but they have two sons working who help. "We're lucky, I guess, listening to the other people here like Maricris. I eat fish sometimes and meat once a month."

The women and the community organizers who work in their areas say the women I interviewed are typical of very many, maybe half of all the members of their communities. There are some urban poor who know the issues and care about Cha-cha, but they are the exception. The great majority, if not exactly as poor as the women interviewed, are concerned with jobs and food. Even land problems take second place unless there's an actual eviction. Can we blame them?

It's not poor people alone. Later in the day, on Radio Veritas, I heard Josua Mata of the Alliance of Progressive Labor say almost the same thing about workers: "Workers are interested in jobs and their rights, not in Cha-cha."

It is not accurate to say the poor or the workers are ignorant and need education about Cha-cha or snap elections. It seems rather, as can be seen from the interviews above, that they have totally different priorities and need help first in pursuing their own priority goals. They will, they said, join rallies for food and jobs. If such rallies find some success, perhaps they'll join other rallies.

"The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty." (Lk 2:53).

Denis Murphy works with the Urban Poor Associates.

Flavors of life

THE BUS HAD ONCE AGAIN STOPPED RIGHT AMID THE tangle of vehicles racing to their destinations regardless of whatever, or whoever, stood in the way. The afternoon's intense heat aggravated everyone's impatience and irritation. Fists were slammed on horns as the bus drivers yelled at alighting passengers to hurry up.

Barely had I jumped off, when the bus jerked forward and zoomed away, leaving me defenseless against the merciless vehicles whose drivers were pressing hard on the accelerators, seemingly intent on flattening me on the asphalt highway. I braced myself for another game of patintero, dodging cars, buses and jeepneys and the occasional commuter who would stop a bus or jeepney right in the middle of the road.

YOUNG BLOOD

Louella E. Fortez

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

Patintero was the childhood game of which my friends and I were undisputed champions. The outstretched arms of our opponents, no matter how long, could not make even the slightest contact with our shoulders, and their legs were always too slow for our quick feet. Had I been as slow-footed as those in the other team, things would have ended differently, with me ending up with some broken bones or, worse, under a gravestone. For Filipino drivers, people are not people, regardless of whether they are walking on the pedestrian lane, people are just obstacles standing in their way.

And yet a big part of me remains sentimental about—and even loyal to—commuting. Maybe I've inhaled too much smoke and gasoline.

Commuting's a pain actually, and finally learning to drive will actually be bliss. Imagine: No more dodging vehicles eager to crush me; no more arguing with the driver about the correct change; no more risk of asphyxiation whenever pressed between armchairs that could very well be biological weapons; no more looking at other passengers whose lined, slack faces are grim reminders of a bleak tomorrow.

On car windows, I'd see only myself and the road ahead. If I drive a car, I won't have to leave the house two hours before an appointment. I won't have to fork over a big chunk of my allowance for the cab ride home when darkness deepens. I won't have to wait for the jeepney on the side of the road where men whose bellies flow over the faded waistbands of their shorts throw lewd remarks at me.

Learning to drive is an exciting, even romantic rite of passage. Filipinos usually learn it when they are 18, just as they are about to begin another promising chapter of their lives, which is college.

Driving takes you away from the world you've always known and brings you into a new one that you will come to love. It also brings you back to your roots. But if you prefer the dusty yet scenic route, commuting does the job as well.

Commuting is also a test of one's survival skills. In school, I was taught to always wait in line, to sprinkle every reply to an older person with "po" or "opo." Being on your best behavior at all times distinguished you from the hoi polloi whose faces were dark from spending too much time under the sun.

But inside public transportation, poise means nothing. You can stay in line for as long as you wish, keep your hands to yourself and watch wistfully as the jeepney rolls away, crammed with passengers who elbowed their way to a coveted seat.

No amount of "po," or even "please" will convince the driver to give you the correct change, but an expletive definitely will.

In a jeepney, I often find myself elbow to elbow, even elbow to stomach, with the very people parents warn their children about. There's the guy of college age who is pretending to be still going to school, a cigarette in his mouth as he gets off the jeepney to go to the mall across the street at nine in the morning. There's the old woman who sits with her legs spread apart to hold the basket of dried fish she is selling at the wet market a few meters ahead. Her eyes are yellowed pools, her face like aged leather and dark from the sun.

But there were others who invite a smile. Like the 2-year-old-girl sitting on her mother's lap and singing, "My hump, my hump, my lovely lady lump." There are the excited Koreans in shorts and T-shirts pelting their guide with questions about the country. There's the gallant old man hanging on at the back of the jeepney after giving up his seat to a young woman. When she offers to pay his fare, he smiles and says, "Thank you, but I've already paid, miss."

In the 45 minutes it takes to where one is going, one becomes a witness to slivers of different lives. It's an experience that can be disturbing at times but is more often illuminating. One is confronted with embodiments of sadness, desperation and joy. And this is the reason learning to drive is unthinkable for me right now.

In a car, who will I see but myself, or my passenger who will certainly be a long-time friend or a relative I've known my entire life? After my favorite music stops playing, it is the twangy voice of a self-absorbed delay that will take over. I'd rather listen to passengers complaining about rising prices, and how they made the growling in their stomach louder. A wide-eyed little boy, looking even smaller as he sits squeezed between adults, with a heavy school bag on his lap, is a sight both heart-breaking and admirable.

While commuting, I observe snapshots of life that I would have thought to be the stuff of fiction had I spent my whole life looking at the world through the windshield that muffles and sometimes mutes the raw cries, strained laughter and heavy sighs of real people. A rickety jeepney is all that I need to bring me to wherever I wish. It is inside this vehicle where I am touched by faces that are lined or flawless and hands that are clean or grimy. It is the only place where sweet, sour, bitter and spicy blend to offer the real flavors of life.

Louella E. Fortez, 24, graduated from the Ateneo de Manila University with a degree in creative writing. She is doing graduate studies at the University of the Philippines.

The summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro

ROMY GARDUCE WAS CAUGHT ON TV BEING interviewed by Mike Enriquez of GMA-7's "24 Oras." Romy, wearing his snow outfit minus his gloves, could still bear the cold at the base camp of Mt. Everest. Mike seemed to be comfortable in his suit inside the studio while the temperature hit 36 degrees Celsius outside.

The scene at the base camp of Mt. Everest transported me back to the base camp of Mt. Kilimanjaro nine years ago. The ambassador of Tanzania in Nairobi, Kenya, arranged an annual "diplomatic climb of Mt. Kilimanjaro." Asian ambassadors from Indonesia, Korea and the Philippines decided to join the climb. One United Nations official, two businessmen, two American tourists and two female students from Sweden formed part of our group.

It would be a five-day climb—three days going up and two days coming down. We should start at a small town in Tanzania just outside the Kenyan border. There was a magnificent view of Kilimanjaro in Murango town.

Hemingway, of course, introduced me to the snows of Mt. Kilimanjaro in high school. Later on, we learned of a story that the early English explorers in Kenya, perhaps looking for the elusive source of the Nile, reported to London that it was cold in that country. In fact, there was snow in Mt. Kenya! The British Club was laughing at this heresy—noting that, indeed, Kenya in East Africa, along with Singapore in South East Asia, and Ecuador in Latin America, was located near the Equator.

From that border town of Murango, the road to our destination was reasonably wide but unpaved, surrounded by lush vegetation. The only reminder from our Tanzanian coordinator was to take it easy. We would make it in three days, he emphasized. If we hurried, we might fall in the situation of two US Marines who jogged the first two days going to Mt. Kilimanjaro, and came back to the little town the third day.

The inspiration given by the owner of the lodge in Murango: "For the past three years now, a 70-year-old British kept coming back to the summit of Kilimanjaro."

We had in our backpacks only little things that were really needed, like bottled water, camera and

HIGH BLOOD

Nelson D. Laviña

WE'D also like to know the concerns of the sixtysomething and above, what makes their blood pressure rise or makes them sit back, content that all's well with their world and with themselves.—Ed.

some personal items. Other things could be entrusted to some native porters for reasonable fees. I saw that some porters carried food supplies.

We spent the first night at a camp where we enjoyed our dinner and anticipated rest.

The second day saw the lush vegetation slowly vanishing. We were among unfamiliar trees, wild grass, vines and flowers. We felt the slow ascent exhilarating. Mt. Kilimanjaro remained distant, snow-capped, majestic. We spent the second night at a camp where we preferred deserved rest to good food.

Always starting early at dawn, on the third day, our strides became slower and the rest points more frequent. The ascent still seemed gradual, but we saw only a panorama of desert-like landscapes. I even thought that we were on our way to that famous safari destination called Serengeti. We were now wearing our boots, snow goggles and gloves.

My body began to ache. We asked the Tanzanian ambassador if there was a short cut. The good ambassador merely smiled. We knew there was no way escaping this non-Lenten sacrifice.

It was almost dusk when we reached the camp at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro. We felt that we already negotiated about a height of 4,000 meters of the jewel peak (6,000 m) of Africa, reputed to be much higher than Grossglockner of the Austrian Alps which I traversed in the late 1980s while on assignment in Vienna. Some more great effort and determination would bring me to the summit of Kilimanjaro.

The Tanzanian colleague told us that we would make the final ascent at midnight. Otherwise, go-

ing up, we would not survive the heat of the blazing sun, and/or the frozen hell on the crater of the mountain.

My whole body now was all in pain. But I was more worried that I might suffer a heart attack. I felt my heart was pounding ever louder—in fact the loudest since I was born! I went to the toilet to relieve myself before destiny. Nothing doing. The sheer coldness of the night, so many degrees below zero, put Siberia into shame, and denied me little comfort.

At 12 midnight, we, together with one or two other groups, proceeded to the ultimate climb. The night or morning seemed clear enough; natural light showed the way. The snow on top glistened more brightly. But I thought I did not mind anybody or anything else anymore—except my climbing stick and my heart whose pounding threatened to burst or break my thorax.

At every step up, I could feel that I tended to slide a little bit down. Perhaps it was my imagination. Or maybe it was because the way up was made of sand or porous clay. I was fatigued and sleepy. My feet were heavy as lead.

Then suddenly, I knew I had enough of this insanity. Or did I wake up? At about midpoint of the ascent, I told our Tanzanian coordinator that I had to go down. He motioned to a guide to accompany me. I saw others turning their backs away from fame and glory. One Asian ambassador whispered to me that he would continue his suicidal attempt to conquer Kilimanjaro. He almost got his wish. Indeed he came back still very much alive, but on a stretcher.

I vowed to the Tanzanian ambassador that I would definitely return to the base camp the following year, and make a final climb to the summit. I might be making a diplomatic lie, as I got an order to go to another posting before the end of that year.

Five years later, after my retirement, I was enjoying another adventure of a lifetime. I was swimming with whale sharks, the friendly behemoth of the deep, the *butanding*, together with my daughter and son-in-law at Donsol.

Nelson D. Laviña is a retired ambassador.

The Philippines' sanctuaries of terror

THE PRESENCE OF INSURGENT OR TERRORIST sanctuaries in non-belligerent countries is one of the most intractable, explosive issues in international relations. It was a central fact of the Vietnam War, brought about the destruction of Lebanon, and continues to plague the coalition in Iraq. It is also key to the present war on terror in Southeast Asia.

Vietnam differed from Korea and Malaya, where containment and counterinsurgency prevailed, because the communists could outflank allied forces in South Vietnam by using "neutral" territory in Cambodia and Laos. Like the PLO presence in Lebanon until 1982, this strategy plunged hapless host countries into civil war and provoked invasions by stronger powers, in turn spawning more extremist movements—the Khmer Rouge, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad.

Like previous host countries, the Philippines is a weak state, at peace with its neighbors and the West. But, since 1994, its lawless southern islands have replaced Afghanistan as the main training ground and refuge for Southeast Asian jihadists. Most are Indonesians belonging to Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), Mujahidin Kompak and other Darul Islam factions.

Graduates of Mindanao's terror camps, for example, now rival in number the older generation of Southeast Asian Afghan alumni that forged ties with al-Qaida. Veterans of the Mindanao camps took part in almost every JI-linked bombing since 2000, including the attack that killed hundreds in Bali in 2002. New cohorts will pose a danger for years to come.

The terrorist attacks on the United States of Sept. 11, 2001 galvanized American interest in the southern Philippines. Mere weeks after the planes hit, Pentagon planners negotiated a return of American troops to Mindanao for the first time since the colonial era. Indeed, Mindanao was the second front in the war on terror until Iraq came to dominate US threat perceptions. Australian Prime Minister John Howard has likewise openly mulled preemptive military strikes on terrorist sanctuaries in the region.

WORLD VIEW

Kit Collier and Malcolm Cook

Mindanao is not Cambodia or Lebanon, but the essential dilemma is the same. How does one separate the terrorist parasite from its unwilling host, without doing fatal violence to the patient?

In the Philippines, the diagnosis is complicated by the fact that terrorists are embedded in a volatile Muslim insurgency with which the West has no quarrel. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is Southeast Asia's strongest separatist group. It enjoys popular support, expresses legitimate grievances, and peace talks are underway. Like the Palestinians, however, the MILF is riven by factions, and its leaders cannot, or will not, exclude terrorists from areas that they control.

In part, this reflects political hedging by the MILF in the face of Manila's incapacity to make meaningful concessions. President Macapagal-Arroyo's government is on the ropes, with a state of emergency declared in February, following an abortive coup attempt and months of instability arising from allegations of fraud in the 2004 elections. The allegations involve the Armed Forces' manipulation of the Mindanao vote—underscoring how state failure in the south, a politicized military, and paralysis in the capital reinforce each other in a downward spiral.

State failure in the southern Philippines now places the entire region at risk. After a rough passage to democracy, a traditionally strong Indonesian state is reasserting itself, forcing jihadists out, and across Mindanao's porous frontiers. Despite concerns over conflict in southern Thailand, there are no secessionist enclaves beyond government control, and no indications of foreign terrorist involvement.

Only in the Philippines do state failure, chronic insurgency, and proliferating ties between local

and foreign terrorists come together in a lethal cocktail. Combined with a restive military and an impotent administration, the country has become Southeast Asia's weakest link in the war on terror.

So what is to be done? American forces are probing the sanctuaries in the guise of training exercises, and they are backing targeted air strikes. But they must tread lightly, lest they be drawn into a shooting war, which would catalyze new alliances among local and foreign militants. A conventional military approach failed in Cambodia and Lebanon. It would fail in Mindanao, too.

Instead, surgical military strikes based on an expanded intelligence effort should complement the peace process, prying extremists away from the MILF mainstream. A crucial, if embryonic, mechanism in this campaign is the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group, established by the Philippine government and MILF negotiators to facilitate cooperation against "lawless elements" in MILF territory. The group's mandate should be widened, and resources should be provided to allow it to tackle terrorism explicitly.

In return for MILF cooperation, the United States, Australia and other interested countries must pick up political slack and build the government's capacity to deliver a sustainable peace agreement for Mindanao. Prompt, substantial infusions of post-conflict aid will be indispensable ingredients for peace.

But so will security reforms. The Armed Forces must be better equipped to close down any remaining terrorist sanctuaries—and keep them closed. However, this will remain a futile mission until the Armed Forces is professionalized and depoliticized through reorientation to external defense, border security and special operations. Only then will they lose their vested interest in an insurgency that has no end. *Project Syndicate*

Kit Collier is a consultant to the International Crisis Group and Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University. Malcolm Cook is program director for Asia and the Pacific at the Lowy Institute for International Policy.

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OPINION

EVAT unfair to senior citizens

THE EXPANDED VALUE ADDED tax, which was recently increased to 12 percent, is unfair to senior citizens. It takes back 60 percent of the legally mandated 20 percent discount on food and services given to senior citizens, thus leaving only 8 percent of the discount, which is gobbled up by the service charge.

Since many establishments still refuse to grant the discount due mainly to the mistaken belief that it eats into their profits, the poor senior citizen ends up paying 32 percent more for food or service that he/she avails himself/herself of. Ignored, forsaken, sick and with his/her low pension hardly enough for his/her medicines, the senior citizen thought government and society would look back and appreciate what he/she had done during

his/her productive years. The discount was fair enough, but the Arroyo administration has taken it back.

We call on our legislators to restore the benefits that the law has granted to senior citizens by exempting them from the EVAT, just as they have been exempted from income and other tax laws. We also propose that local governments, before renewing business licenses, require commercial establishments to prove their compliance with the Senior Citizens Law by showing evidence of senior citizens discounts.

We also propose that a committee, composed of senior citizens in every town or city, nominated by registered senior citizens' associations in the locality, be appointed by the concerned mayor to assist

the Osca (Office of Senior Citizens Affairs) chair in monitoring and reporting compliance or non-compliance with the Senior Citizens Law.

Lastly, we call on all senior citizens to demand the 20-percent discount and to explain to store cashiers or owners that the discount is shouldered by the government when it is deducted from their income tax payable, and to inform them of the penalties, fine and imprisonment, imposed by law on violators.

Senior citizens cannot blame others for violating the law if they themselves do not assert their rights granted by the law.

—AMADO E. CABAERO,
7 Espina Compound,
B. Rodriguez St., Cebu City

Beyond reasonable doubt not a signatory for Cha-cha

THE FRONT-PAGE "PEOPLE'S initiative" news item and the column of Fr. Joaquin Bernas congratulating newly appointed Comelec Commissioner Rene Sarmiento (PDI, 4/10/06) prompted me to react as follows:

I did not sign or will I ever sign, even if intimidated, threatened and/or bribed (which I will not accept), the "people's initiative."

I expect, hope and pray that other individuals, who did not sign or will ever sign the "people's initiative" to likewise write to Sarmiento, so that their letters will serve as proof that their alleged signatures in the "people's initiative list," submitted to the Comelec by the politicians and their cohorts for verification, have been forged and falsified.

I have a Comelec voters' ID as a registered voter of Quezon City, Second District, Precinct No. 5299A. So if my name and address appear as one of the signatories of the "people's initiative," that is not true, beyond reasonable doubt.

—ISIDORO A. PANLASIGUI JR.,
6 Big Horseshoe Drive,
Horseshoe Village,
1112 Quezon City

Supreme Court has spoken, but where's the ax?

REPLACING THE MEMBERS OF the Commission on Elections is too light a penalty for their role in the loss of billions of pesos earmarked for the Comelec's automation program. ("Distrusted," PDI, 4/18/06) For sure, ordinary citizens are punished just for stealing a few thousand pesos to ease their hunger.

The Comelec chair and commissioners do not admit their

fault. But somebody doesn't have to be a rocket scientist to see that a substantial amount of public money has been wasted and this could have been used for more productive projects. And the Supreme Court has spoken: There were irregularities in the way the transaction was conducted and processed.

But why is nobody being punished? In fact, those who appar-

ently were responsible for the anomalous transaction are still holding on, or clinging to, their positions. Wow!

Is this really a government of the people, for the people and by the people? Or is this a government for some people only, specifically for those around and supporting the President?

—MICHAEL CAPITO,
michael.capito@nl.abb.com

LETTERS

Always a Filipino

I HAVE YET TO APPLY FOR THE re-acquisition of my Philippine citizenship. However, I consider myself a Filipino first and foremost. I am a proud Filipino wherever I am. I contribute my God-given talents to the Filipino community whenever I get an opportunity.

I buy my *pan de sal* and Pinoy goods at *sari-sari* stores. When I crave for *dinuguan*, I go to Filipino restaurants. My car has a Philippine flag; inside, I play OPM (original Pilipino music) most of the time. My jacket easily tells others that I am a Filipino. In my house, we speak Surigaonon, my dialect; you can also find in there Pinoy décor, and my long-neck bottle of Gigaquit Rhum from Surigao City is prominently displayed in the kitchen.

Whenever somebody asks me about the Philippines, I try to answer in the best way I can. Every day I read the Philippine Daily Inquirer on the Net. And most of all, I still pray, as I have been doing before, that life in the Philippines may become better.

My question to former Justice Isagani Cruz (in connection with his column "Dual Allegiance," PDI, 4/22/06) is: When did I abandon the Philippines? Just because I have left the Philippines and acquired a new citizenship, it does not mean that I have abandoned my native land. Or am I less Filipino? I remain a Filipino.

—HARDY DEL CASTILLO,
surigaonon@canada.com

First Mass in Philippines

THE PHOTO ON THE FRONT page of the April 19 issue of the Inquirer, featuring a mangrove forest in Southern Leyte, calls to mind the majesty of nature. It also reminds us of its fragility. With the recent information from geologists that this part of Leyte province is sitting on an area naturally prone to landslides, one cannot help but wonder if what happened to Ginsaogon, St. Bernard, happened to neighboring Limasawa Island long ago.

The debate on where the first Mass in the Philippines was held

has not been put to rest. The official stand is that it was on Limasawa, Leyte. Another group has long advanced, with some compelling evidence, that it was in Masau, Butuan.

The tragic landslides on mainland Southern Leyte may have happened in Limasawa also, thus obliterating the "compelling evidence" historians are looking for. Isn't it time marine archaeologists (and other 'experts') looked into the matter?

—GAVIN SANSON BAGARES,
gavinuno@yahoo.com

Not with PCEC on 'people's initiative'

THIS IS IN REACTION TO THE paid advertisement of Sigaw ng Bayan, which was published in the April 27 issue of the Inquirer. The ad claimed that the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches of the Philippines (PCEC), represented by Bishop Efraim Tendaro and Bishop Fred Magbanua, supports the "people's initiative" for Charter change. Bishop Tendaro was, in fact, quoted as follows: "We see the people's initiative as a valid expression of the (people's support)."

I could hardly believe that the bishop could actually make such a statement on behalf of the PCEC. Can't he see what the government is doing? I agree with those opposing Charter change for now: a genuine people's initiative means one initiated by the people, not directed by people in government.

As an evangelical Protestant whose church is a member of the PCEC, I would like to categorically state: I do not support the people's initiative and I am against Cha-cha in the way the Arroyo administration wants to do it. I cannot support the joint initiative of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo,

Speaker Jose de Venecia and their allies to perpetuate themselves in power.

PCEC leaders should know that it is wrong for them to assume they are representing the evangelical Protestants in this country every time they publicly make a stand on political issues. Bishops Tendaro and Magbanua should consult the churches first before making public their stand on any issue confronting our country.

Since the time of President Marcos, some evangelical leaders have been expressing support for the wrong political leaders and making the wrong stand on many issues. It is a shame that they have not learned their lessons and persist in committing the same mistakes.

I therefore urge other evangelicals who are against the way some of our leaders are publicly presenting their views on political issues, to speak up so that PCEC leaders will know that they do not truly represent our sentiments.

—MIFFLIN ANN A. GARCIA,
mifflinann@gmail.com

Role of church people in nation's political life

THIS IS IN REACTION TO AHMED CORTES' letter (PDI 4/11/06): "Whatever happens in this world happens because God allows it to happen." I agree that God allows everything to happen but He makes sure that those who sin against His people will be held accountable for their actions.

Cortes is trying to spiritualize the issues haunting the Arroyo administration and, without employing critical analysis of what's happening around us, he jumps into the idea that "our wisdom is infinitesimally inconsequential before God."

I doubt if he understands the plan of God as expressed in the Ten Commandments—a plan being violated by some of our so-called leaders as seen in government scandals and corruption. Likewise, I doubt if he is aware that it is not part of God's plan for man to be abused or victimized by sin.

Is Cortes saying that church people should be indifferent to the acts of deception and graft and corruption that are now eroding our moral values; that they should preach only about the angels and saints in heaven and say nothing about the issues affecting the moral dimensions of our political and economic life?

I believe that at the root of our political crisis is a crisis of moral values, a crisis of truth and justice. Civil authority must be held morally accountable. Denouncing immorality in public service and reminding public officials of the moral aspects of leadership are part of the church people's mission to preach the truth.

"Men and women have the specific duty to move always towards truth, to respect it and bear responsible witness to it." (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church No. 198)

—ROLANDO SALON,
rogards_06@yahoo.com

Injudicious statement

CHIEF JUSTICE ARTEMIO PANGANIBAN'S comment about the unconstitutionality of the death penalty is premature and ethically questionable. ("SC Chief Justice: Death penalty is unconstitutional," PDI, 4/26/06)

As chief justice, he should refrain from issuing legal opinions on cases that are not before the court. But he seems to have forgotten the doctrine against the issuance of advisory opinions by any judicial body on an issue not submitted for its decision.

As the head of the highest court of the Philippines, he should refrain from basking in the political limelight and just keep his legal opinions to litigated decisions. Chief Justice Panganiban should act and speak like the Chief Justice of the Philippine Supreme Court.

—JERICHO REMITTO,
jerichor@hotmail.com

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Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Edralyn L. Benedicto

SIPALAY MINING PROJECT

'Frightful' scenario or 'fantastic' claim?

By Hazel P. Villa
Iloilo City

A BROAD ALLIANCE OF environmental activists in Negros Occidental raised fears of environmental pollution after sending an investigative mission to the southern city of Sipalay, site of confirmatory drillings of Colet Mining Development Corp. (CMDC).

Defend Patrimony-South Negros said it visited sitio Dung-I, Barangay Manlucahoc in Sipalay on April 5-7 and found that the 200-hectare deposit area of the planned open-pit mine of CMDC "revealed a frightening scenario."

CMDC, however, said the claims of environmental destruction were "fantastic" because its confirmatory drilling activities were minimal.

According to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau regional office in Iloilo City, CMDC has a Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) of 2,901.8040 hectares for copper and other minerals in Sipalay, about 155 km south of Bacolod City. It is currently undertaking confirmatory drillings within the MPSA area in Barangays Manlucahoc and Nabulao.

High acidity

In an official statement released on April 8, Defend Patrimony said that although CMDC is still at the final stage of its exploration, "the headwaters of the Montoboy and Caiwanan creeks that join the Sipalay River register an extremely high level of acidity of 3.2 pH, far from the normal 7 pH."

"These creeks are almost dead, inhospitable to living creatures. The waters of the creek are reddish and coconut trees are dying along the banks of the creek. A hectare of rice land was covered by siltation from exploration drilling sites," said the statement.

Defend Patrimony is an alliance of environmental activists that include the party-list group Bayan Muna, Mapisan Farmers Federation, Negros Concern for Environmental Protection, Paghidaet sa Kauswagan Development Group, Builder Inc., Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Binhi Foundation Inc., National Federation of Sugar Workers; and the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

Its probe team was led by Fr. Ben Duran, chairperson of Defend Patrimony-South Negros. Its members were mining engineer Efren Fabila; Greg Ratin, head of the social team; geologist Trixie Concepcion from Defend Patrimony's national office; agronomist Dr. Chito Medina; forester Peter Benain, a former researcher of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Environmental Research Bureau; and agriculturist Mike Medina, instructor on Environmental Science at the Trinity College.

The mission claimed that once CMDC operated its open-pit mine at Lepanto Mountain, Montoboy and Caiwanan creeks, the headwaters of Sipalay River would be covered by mine waste and some 100 ha of rich irrigated rice fields would be destroyed.

Gregg Ratin, secretary general of Defend Patrimony, quoted residents of Manlucahoc as saying that CMDC's drillings started in August last year and was supposed to end in December, but this was extended.

"Colet Mines is supposed to drill 36 holes but as of our visit, they have drilled about 20 holes and might start operations anytime this year," said Ratin in a telephone interview Tuesday night.

"All of the farms downstream will also be heavily silted. Toxic effluents of mining operations will pollute the whole Sipalay River system. The rich rice lands of Patag Dung-I will be destroyed and the construction of Colet Mines ancillary facilities will dislocate its 439 residents who have no clear alternative livelihood to their present productive farming," read the statement.

It is not only the farming areas that will be affected by the operations of Colet Mines, said Defend Patrimony, but also the city's rich marine ecosystem that won the Hiyas ng Tourism Best Diving Site Award from the Department of Tourism this year.

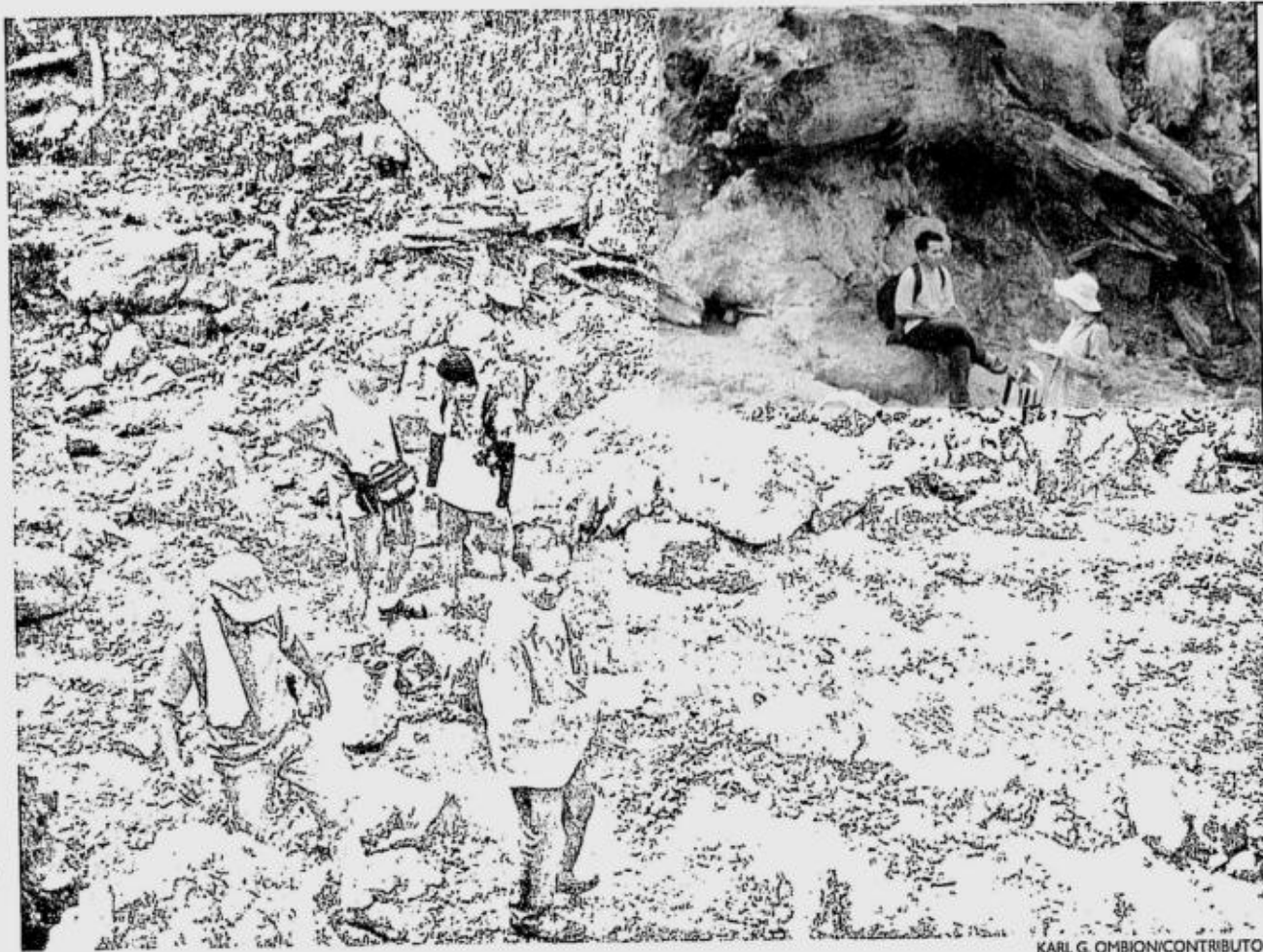
Fantastic claims

"All their (environmental activists) claims are fantastic," said Lincoln Rex Drilon, vice president for environment and community support of JD Muyco and Associates, consultants of CMDC.

In a telephone interview, Drilon said CMDC's confirmatory drillings had nothing at all to do with the claimed pollution in the Montoboy and Caiwanan creeks because the drilling activities were minimal.

"The acidity level also has nothing at all to do with the drilling. The high acidity level is there because of the high mineral content in the area. Some dead flora and fauna is a natural occurrence because of the high mineral content," added Drilon, a first cousin of Sen. Franklin Drilon.

"Today, there is no way that you can have development projects without conscience.



KARL G. OMBION/CONTRIBUTOR

No way," said Drilon.

He said CMDC was strictly following environmental provisions of the Mining Act of 1995 by shelling out 10 percent of its initial capital expenditures for the mining project that will go to environment-related activities and two percent of operating costs for support of the community.

The Mining Act states that mining contractors and operators should allocate a minimum of one percent from their direct mining and milling costs for the development of the host, neighboring communities and mine camp, as well as to promote the general welfare of inhabitants in the area.

"Just think, 10 percent of \$20 million will go to environmental mitigation with a council made up of stakeholders who have a say on how to manage their environment," said Drilon.

As for claims that a huge swath of Sipalay will be affected by CMDC operations, Drilon said the company would be mining only 100 ha of the 2,901.8040 ha in its MPSA.

"Why should we waste our time and money in areas where there are minimal minerals?" he said.

Among other things, CMDC has been doing biological resource management since December and was identifying indigenous tree species for reforestation in Sipalay for a nursery that it started this year, Drilon said.

"We plan to reforest even before we operate. Our dream is [for] the mines [to] be a model for sustainable development," he added.

MGB support

The MGB regional office defended CMDC in an official statement dated April 9, or two days after the environmental activists' investigation mission.

"Contrary to popular belief, the whole area covered by the mining claim will not be mined but it is imperative to subject a bigger area to exploration if investors have to know the feasibility of a mining project," read the MGB statement authorized by Regional Director Reynaldo M. Deveyra.

The bureau said that for confirmatory drillings alone, CMDC, which has an operating agreement with Hinobaan Holdings Philippines Inc., invested P26.87 million.

It added that CMDC still had to submit an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report to the DENR after it has completed the exploration stage (that includes confirmatory drillings).

The MGB did not directly address the issue related to the pollution brought about by CMDC's confirmatory drillings but said it had been regularly monitoring its exploration activities to ensure compliance with the Environmental Work Program (EWP).

The EWP spells out the environmental activities that the company shall undertake to address the impact of its exploration activities, if there are any.

The MGB did not give other details related to the EWP but cited that it had "institutionalized stringent measures to ensure the compliance of mining contractors/operators with internationally accepted standards of environmental management."

Western Visayas, said MGB, was included in the government's 24 major mining project areas in the next five to six years because of its mineral deposits, specifically in the mineral-rich district of southwestern Negros Occidental.

The revitalization of the country's mineral industry is expected to generate \$8 billion for the government with copper among the Philippines' major mineral reserves, said the

bureau, quoting Environment Secretary Angelo T. Reyes.

Defend-Patrimony-South Negros said Sipalay was facing a repeat of the mining disaster caused by the operations of Maricalum Mining Corp., which closed in 2002 after operating for 45 years, and Philex Mining Corp., which operated from 1994 to 2000.

Ratin said the tailings ponds of the two mining firms spilled over several times in recent years and destroyed parts of the Sipalay River and its creeks and tributaries, as well as more than 400 ha of rice fields.

Residents around the mining sites also suffered toxic dermatitis and acute respiratory infections from gas emitted from the mine tailings, he claimed.

Drilon said CMDC would construct some dams that will act as filters before water from the mines went into the rivers and other waterways.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL mission team inspects the Montoboy and Caiwanan creeks, Sitio Dung-I, Barangay Manlucahoc, Sipalay. These creeks are almost dead, not hospitable to living creatures. At right is a map showing Sipalay town in Negros Occidental.



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Bishop Cruz: 'Jueteng' back for polls

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOP LEADING A campaign against "jueteng" said he was convinced the illegal numbers game has returned to help finance the campaign kitty of some politicians in next year's elections.

"Not far from now is the envisioned 2007 elections," Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said in a statement. "It is not surprising at all that jueteng is once again back in business."

Cruz, leader of the Krusadang Bayan Laban sa Jueteng, did not name any politician supposedly dipping his finger in the multi-billion-peso underground lottery.

But a look back at sworn statements in the Senate jueteng investigations last year suggested that "jueteng money was used to make a difference in the 2004 national elections," he said.

Citing reports from his group's 62 chapters nationwide, the archbishop said jueteng was "slowly but surely invading" all provinces

in Regions 1 and 2, Tarlac, Zambales, Pampanga, Bulacan, Cavite, Batangas, Quezon, and Camarines Sur.

Cruz said the report even named people running the show in these provinces, including the so-called "payola coordinators." He did not make the names available, though.

"Like a cat with proverbial nine lives, jueteng in this country keeps coming back like a bad dream," he said.

"Those in power and influence stop it at will for a reason, and at will, likewise have it resumed for a purpose. At one time it is eventually all gone. After some time, it is surprisingly slowly but surely back."

Jueteng has returned with the government-sponsored Small Town Lottery as its front in some provinces.

Described by critics as a legalized version of jueteng, the STL has been heavily criticized by Church leaders.

Archbishop Paciano Aniceto of San Fernando, Pampanga and Bishop Socrates Villegas of Balanga, Bataan issued statements saying they didn't want the numbers game anywhere in their jurisdiction.

In them, Cruz, who used to fight a lonely battle against gambling, found outspoken allies.

Cruz yesterday vented his ire on people running jueteng operations.

"Only individuals who are shameless, callous and the scourge of society could have the gall to be jueteng principals," he said.

"Those who surreptitiously back them up are even greater liabilities to society. As all of them occupy a special place of dishonor here and now, theirs must also be a distinct level of condemnation hereafter and beyond—irrespective of their belief and value system."



NO WAR DANCE

Kalinga natives perform a dance that the province's governor, Dominador Belac Sr., refuses to call a war dance to erase the province's image as a region of tribal conflicts. The recent 11th Foundation Day of Kalinga focused instead on daily agricultural life.

PDI PHOTO

NOTICE TO DELINQUENT MEMBERS OF SUBIC BAY YACHT CLUB

In accordance with the provisions of its Articles of Incorporation and By-laws, the Board of Directors of Subic Bay Yacht Club Inc., has approved for auction the membership shares corresponding to the following membership share number and stock certificate numbers due to the delinquency in their payments of their outstanding obligations to the Club:

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MEM #	STOCK Cert. No.	MEM #	STOCK Cert. No.	MEM #	STOCK Cert. No.	MEM #	STOCK Cert. No.	MEM #	STOCK Cert. No.	MEM #	STOCK Cert. No.
0854	000729	0931	001350	1316	001335	0179	003280	C0516	000755	C1397	001473
0168	000058	0215	000141	1412	001323	1276	001440	C0061	000256	C0600	001252
0627	000394	0840	000910	0704	001506	0523	001279	C0403	000277	C0555	000415
0097	000990	0709	000891	1149	001167	0603	003161	C1188	000775	C1908	003430
1222	001324	0724	000649	1681	001612	0057	000043	C1238	000766	C1641	002061
0884	001304	1284	001461	0591	001232	1640	002059	C1037	001485	C0949	000439
0423	000355	1489	001182	1054	001322	0502	000669	C0876	001284	C1228	001475
0186	000145	1667	001579	1110	001292	0899	000572	C1287	001203	C1490	001392
0136	000147	1699	001613	0220	000114	0184	001523	C1015	000895	C0536	001313
0140	000157	1201	001038	0807	000771	0615	000951	C1253	001415	C1874	003439
0855	000776	0554	001190	1434	000403	1197	001214	C0629	001090	C1229	001489
0254	000245	1719	000340	1108	001333	1625	002060	C1127	000913	C1184	001110
1557	001627	0422	000739	0936	000935	0943	001171	C1733	001632	C0528	001194
1432	001026	1337	001509	0594	003145	0073	000075	C1124	002826	C1618	001930
1464	001545	0999	001055	1072	000699	0090	000715	C1209	000826	C1332	002829
1517	003316	0217	000030	1493	001530	0686	000057	C1192	001255	C1853	003400
0684	001025	0618	001217	0529	001301	0047	000034	C1406	001311	C1602	001932
0685	001137	0730	000869	1509	001408	0417	000199	C1087	001310	C1715	003154
0733	000690	0997	001580	0593	000376	0320	000118	C0682	000507	C1801	001929
0795	003168	0208	000017	0751	000559	0348	000551	C1678	002905	C1259	001469
0886	000856	1494	001443	1644	003149	1200	001032	C1502	001402	C1879	003440
0891	000858	0533	001317	0056	000268	0085	003172	C1425	003317	C1737	001804
0952	000825	0933	001077	0275	001077	0859	003348	C1020	002817	C0910	003373
0958	000836	0505	001172	1311	001132	0108	000108	C0273	000984	C1058	003173
0969	000563	0982	000714	1428	001494	1566	003088	C0789	000823	C1349	002132
1045	000823	1726	003311	1448	001336	1473	003169	C0202	000788	C0942	000970
1143	003319	1221	001340	1392	001779	1492	001315	C1661	001558	C0441	001104
1147	001169	1323	000932	1062	001594	0113	000110	C0534	003307	C1495	001565
1249	000991	0620	000722	1211	000808	0965	000461	C1801	002075	C0421	000725
0029	000882	0658	001454	0736	003382	0173	000024	C1309	001343	C1583	003371
0181	000854	0491	000843	0373	003294	0978	000774	C1532	001394	C1554	003308
0197	000125	0783	001000	0122	005014	1461	001615	C0988	000749	C1711	003165
0221	000113	0819	000905	0211	000996	0613	000679	C0946	003171	C1263	001099
0255	000247	1563	001783	0972	001442	0247	000038	C1042	001098	C1904	003416
0256	000248	1338	001516	1109	001297	1696	003276	C1285	001246	C1423	001514
0304	000359	1506	001191	1065	001296	0443	000847	C0705	000511	C1814	003358
0424	000191	0258	000085	0476	000872	1662	001611	C0959	000615	C1819	003344
0488	000494	0265	003132	1101	001128	0276	000173	C1383	001886	C1362	001280
1106	001610	0311	000561	1262	001500	0376	000717	C1091	003177	C1854	003391
1148	001018	1095	001129	0455	001442	0716	000535	C1325	001269	C1113	001556
1433	001133	1822	003350	0262	000894	0719	000425	C1225	001089	C1916	003422
0745	000733	0699	000745	0833	000666	0872	000937	C0938	001338	C1531	001281
0142	000139	1180	003167	1536	001386	1035	001007	C1280	001417	C1153	000827
1405	001561	0786	000728	1233	001011	1205	001159	C1347	001619	C1717	001791
0152	000144	0759	000612	0054	000217	1463	001505	C1111	003178	C0527	000510
0708	001213	0968	000564	0507	000527	1707	003357	C1177	000862	C1018	001053
1123	001563	1807	003339	0511	000522	1061	000989	C0693	001797	C1413	001474
0437	000434	0372	000031	0203	000031	0302	000062	C1503	001393	C1894	003425
0214	000227	0369	000401	0457	000327	1574	001924	C0866	001465	C1860	003394
0919	001081	0690	001798	0602	000902	0644	000556	C1866	003415	C0660	000454
0153	000039	0622	001230	0415	001295	1911	003411	C0914	000785	C1204	001116
0259	003170	1729	001897	0334	001359	1191	001306	C1230	000323	C1868	003441
0228	000255	1825	003352	0404	001078	1816	003158	C1035	000791	C0800	001101
1353	001435	0532	000555	1765	003131	0066	000020	C1440	001341	C0992	000758
1486	001378	1103	001180	1067	000915	0451	000546	C1687	003313	C0885	003141
1455	001383	0405	001071	1648	002812	1310	003320	C0374	003071	C0738	001573
1130	001136	1354	001175	0762	001175	0762	000483	C1175	001339	C1913	003423
0439	000877	0880	001498	1320	000225	0844	000698	C0934	000588	C0503	000917
0261	000626	0911	001921	0154	002058	0926	001045	C0608	000408	C1340	001115
0679	000987	1794	001363	1479	001363	1167	001352	C0778	001487	C0846	000967
01732	001633	0729	003312	1469	001363	0429	000336	C0921	003175	C0513	000406
0963	000566	0327	001935	1469	001935	0397	000674	C0674	000473	C1477	001902
1098	000642	0219	001634	1398	001504	0773	000196	C0381	000222	C1107	001125
0192	000148	1318	000115	1443	001138	1288	000682	C0945	001242	C1186	001247
0182	000056	0466	001332	1679	001589		001334	C1383	001466	C0578	001022
0435	000673	1364	000692	1241	000866			C1820	003363	C1870	003438
1026	001289	1125	001050					C0657	001118	C1892	003424
0761	001349	1446	000747					C0990	000580	C0750	000606
1237	001225	1527	000747					C1811	003120	C0300	000297
0427	000874	0395	001270					C1255	001312	C1274	001777
0614	000489	0418	001364					C1540	002830	C1589	001896
0477	000513	0929	000321					C0798	000579	C0849	000600
0766	000938	1185	000194					C0389	000252	C1355	001091
1213	001152	1567	001229					C1141	001479	C1190	002831
1085	001436	1657	000886					C0394	000270	C0948	001195
0483	000370	0268	001782					C1193	001571	C1300	001260
0080	000930	0566	002810					C1533	001568	C1403	001476
0446	001107	1541	000121					C1419	001309	C1616	003250
			001409								

The minimum bid is set at Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (P200,000.00) for Individual Membership share and Four Hundred Thousand Pesos (P400,000.00) for Corporate Membership share. Transfer and entrance fees of Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00) shall be paid by the winning bidder.

If no bids be received or if the winning bidder fails to pay the amount of his bid within 24 hours after the bidding, the Club may in its discretion appropriate the share itself in the amount equivalent to the outstanding obligation of the member plus interest, penalties and other charges. In the event that the Club refuses to exercise said right the auction procedure may be repeated from time to time at the discretion of the Membership Committee until the share of stock is sold. (Article X Sec. 1. of the By-Laws)

The complete Rules Governing the Auction of Delinquent Shares are available at the Membership Services Department.

The auction proper shall be held on May 22, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. at the Mezzanine Floor, Robinson Summit Center, Bldg. 6783, Ayala Ave, Makati City.

For further inquiries, please contact the office of the undersigned at Tel. No. 531-1542 or the Membership Services Department at 844-5777, (047) 252-5211.

IBP seeks tight security for lawyers in Ecleo case

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—THE INTEGRATED BAR of the Philippines (IBP) Cebu City chapter has asked the Cebu City Police Office (CCPO) to provide security to six lawyers who volunteered to serve as private prosecutors of the parricide case against cult leader Ruben Ecleo Jr. Lawyer Alex Tolentino, the chapter's president, wrote on Thursday to CCPO chief Supt. Melvin Gayotin to ask for police protection for the lawyers after two of them received threats through text messages. Tolentino identified the lawyers who received the threatening text messages as Necitas Ybanez and Gina Co. The other private prosecutors are Fritz Quiñanola, Kit Enriquez, Democrito C. Barcenas and Alfredo Sipalay. Tolentino said he believed the threats were related to the parricide case against Ecleo, who was accused

of killing his wife Alona Bacolod Ecleo in 2002, because the messages were received after Cebu Regional Trial Court Judge Geraldine Faith Econg ordered a medical reexamination of Ecleo, who was freed on a P1-million bail in 2004 to undergo heart tests.

Econg ordered a reexamination to determine if Ecleo was really sick.

Econg also ordered that additional pieces of evidence against Ecleo be admitted.

Tolentino said the people behind the text messages could be educated because the text messages were in English and well written.

Tolentino said the threats also appeared to be serious and the IBP could not afford to be complacent, especially after the previous private prosecutor, lawyer Arbet Sta. Ana Yongco, was killed inside her house in 2004.

"It appears that the private prose-

cutors are warned not to attend the next hearing of the (Ecleo) case on May 12," Tolentino said.

The three text messages were both received by Ybanez and Co on May 1. The first two came in an interval of just a few minutes while the third one came almost four hours later.

One message read: "Your life is in my hands, u are encircled with my goons, I pity u, u must be ready every-time u go out, especially going in court, I think not a joke."

Another, said: "ok u look outside somebody is watching u, u try to go out and somebody tailing u, and waiting 4 a good target, u must be d mice and we d CATS."

The third message read: "Were sure its u, were ghost, we can see u, u don't see us, u must be ready 2 see st peter, u know when you die baby...u must refrain attending our next hearing."

All these text messages came from cellular number 09182963804.

ROUNDUP

Village exec, wife slain

COTABATO CITY—A village chair and his wife were killed in an ambush along the Narciso Ramos Highway in Barira, Maguindanao on Monday. Police said Mantua Iram, 42, barangay chair of Bayanga, Barira, and his wife Dacungan, 38, died from multiple bullet wounds. The couple, aboard a family-owned jeep, was on their way to this city when gunmen waylaid them, said Senior Supt. Akmad Mamalinta, police chief of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Mamalinta said the killing could be personal or may be related to a family feud, which is common among Moro inhabitants of Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur.

Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Bandits killed in Davao Sur

DIGOS CITY—A bandit leader in Jose Abad Santos, Davao del Sur died when an angry follower shot him on April 29, police reports said. The suspect, Akil Tablino, also decapitated Nario Ambong, 35, leader of a bandit group operating in Jose Abad Santos and Glan in Sarangani province. Jose Abad Santos police chief Insp. Charlie Merca said they learned of the killing only when Tablino surrendered to the police on May 2. He brought Ambong's head when he yielded. Investigators said Tablino became furious after his brother Bledo died in an encounter with the military. Merca said the suspect blamed Ambong for his brother's death.

Eldie S. Aguirre, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Drug pusher dead in Davao

DAVAO CITY—A suspected drug pusher was killed in Talomo district here when he tried to shoot an undercover agent on Tuesday, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in Southern Mindanao said. Supt. Wilkins Villanueva, PDEA regional chief, said Julius Gonzaga, described to be in his early 30s, was being arrested for possession of shabu. Gonzaga, police said, drew a handgun and tried to shoot the policeman, according to Villanueva. Other police officers immediately fired at Gonzaga. Gonzaga died on the spot. "He belonged to the higher echelon of illegal drug pushers in the city," Villanueva told the INQUIRER.

Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau

6 inmates bolt jail

SORSOGON CITY—Six more inmates escaped from the Sorsogon provincial jail early Saturday, an official of the jail facility said. The prisoners bolted jail by sawing off two window grills inside their cell, provincial jail guard Ramon Candel said. The escapees were identified as Noel Damesa of Bacon, Sorsogon City who is facing a murder case; Mike Arena of Daraga, Albay for car theft; Damiano Alimudin, Sorsogon City, murder; Christopher Liarena, Pilar, murder; Richard Baylon, Donsol, rape; and Arnel Halom, Casiguran, murder. Three inmates were also able to escape last month.

Bobby Q. Labalan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Bulusan watch



ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

day, Bulusan fell silent with steam plumes billowing 150 meters above its summit. The Philvolcs bulletin said only two volcanic quakes were recorded in the past 24 hours.

Bobby Q. Labalan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Market administrator slain

CAMP VICENT LIM, Laguna—An administrator of a public market in Cavite was shot dead by unidentified suspects along the Aguinaldo Highway in Imus, Cavite at dawn Tuesday. Chief Supt. Prospero Noble, Calabarzon police director, identified the victim as Antonio Dy, 47, of Palace Athena, Barangay Anabu, Imus town. Noble said the victim was driving his tricycle to bring his wife to the public market in Coastal Road, Barangay Anabu when he was waylaid by gunmen in a van without a license plate. Noble said Dy died from two gunshot wounds in the body.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Woman dies in fire

CEBU CITY—A 40-year-old widow was charred to death after a makeshift firecracker factory in Purok Judas Belt, Sitio Naga, Barangay Babag 2, Lapulapu City exploded at 4:22 p.m. on Tuesday. Marina Berdon, 40, a mother of two and resident of Sitio Naga, was cutting the wicks of a Judas Belt firecracker when it sparked and ignited other firecrackers and chemicals in a nearby drum. SFO1 Attilano Berido, investigator of the Lapulapu City Fire Department, said Berdon died on the spot due to severe injuries and burns. The fire department placed the property damage at P4,000. Berido said the fire department is coordinating with the police department and the family of Berdon to find out if the owner of the makeshift factory, Hideliza Batucan, could be charged criminally.

Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau

Group gets new members

CAMP DIEGO SILANG, La Union—The provincial chapter of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) was organized here on April 23 with at least 17 members of families of victims of heinous crimes and politically motivated killings in the province as the group's initial members. Dante Jimenez, VACC chair, said the group was organized to help the victims' families know their rights, to help them find justice for their relatives and to secure protection for themselves. Earlier, the group told Jimenez that their cases were moving slowly. Police said at least 17 people in La Union have been killed since the 2004 elections.

Peter La. Julian, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

W. Visayas workers seek P75 wage hike

BACOLOD CITY—THREE LABOR GROUPS filed a petition for a P75 across-the-board wage increase at the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board in Western Visayas.

The petition cites rising prices of fuel and basic commodities as basis for the wage increase demand, said Carlos Boteros, Department of Labor and Employment regional director.

The petitioners were the National Congress of Unions in the Sugar Industry of the Philippines, Congress of Independent Organizations and the Philippine Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Workers Union, all belonging to the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP).

Boteros said the wage board members had deliberated on the petition and had asked the Department of Trade and Industry for price levels and economic data in Western Visayas to aid them in deciding whether or not to grant the petition.

The wage board will meet again this month to deliberate on the petition.

"There are implementing guidelines that we cannot disturb a wage order issued within a period of 12 months unless there are supervening conditions that exist," Boteros said.

The last wage order was issued on June 18 last year, increasing by P15 the minimum wages of private sector workers in Western Visayas.

Boteros, however, said only 75 percent of businesses in the region were complying with the wage order.

He said economic difficulties also resulted in the retrenchment of some workers.

But Boteros said figures showed that as of October 2005, the employment rate in Western Visayas was 94.3 percent, higher than the national figure of 92.6 percent.

In the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan ordered a review and possible issuance of a new wage order for workers in the private sector.

In his Labor Day message, Ampatuan said he recognized the need for additional wages.

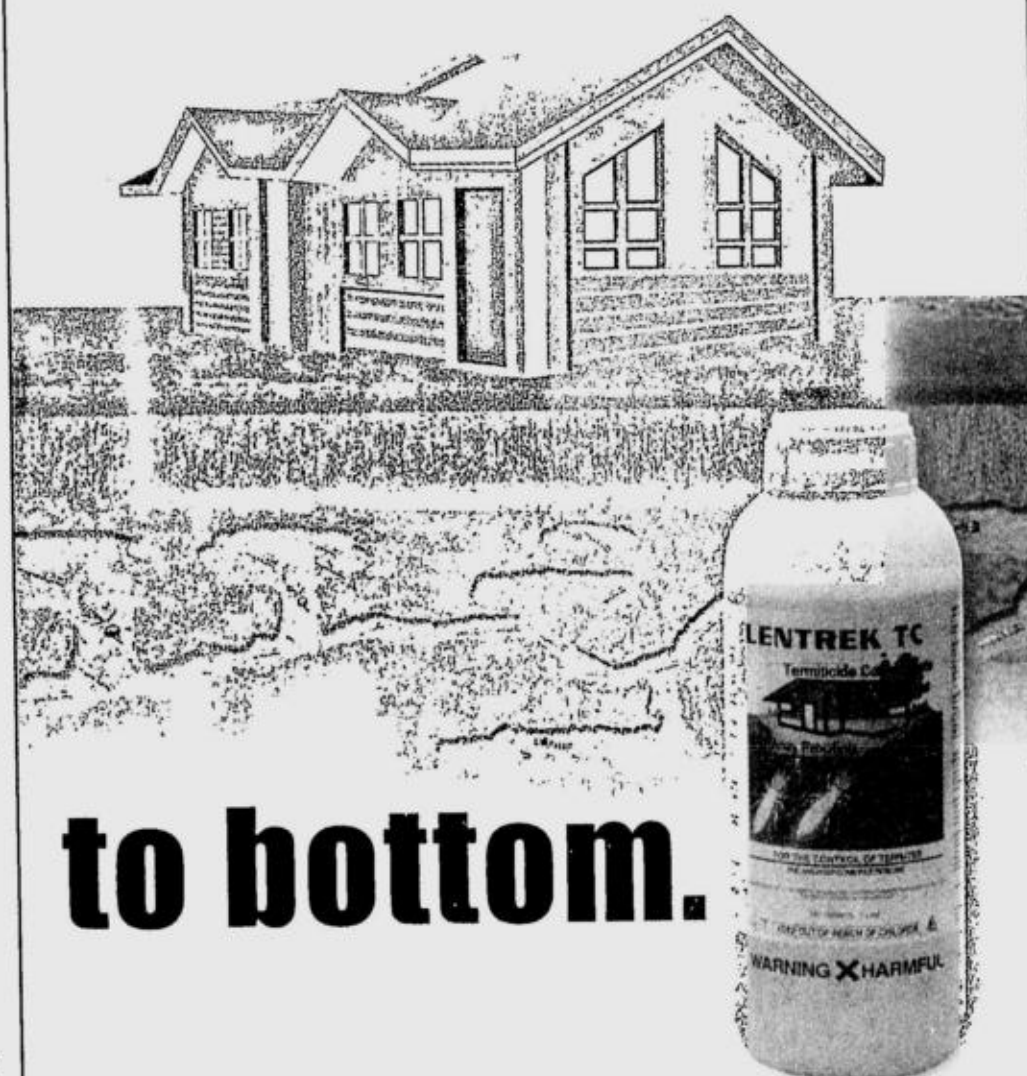
A daily wage earner in the most impoverished region in the country is taking home P180 a day, way below workers in Central Mindanao and other administrative regions.

"There's a need to review it so we can determine how much an increase would be and whether the employers could afford it," Ampatuan said.

The governor said paying workers justly and fairly would make them productive that would eventually lead to more profits on the part of employers.

Lawyer Oscar Sampulna, ARMM executive secretary, said Ampatuan has scheduled a meeting with the business community and business leaders in the ARMM. Carla R. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau and Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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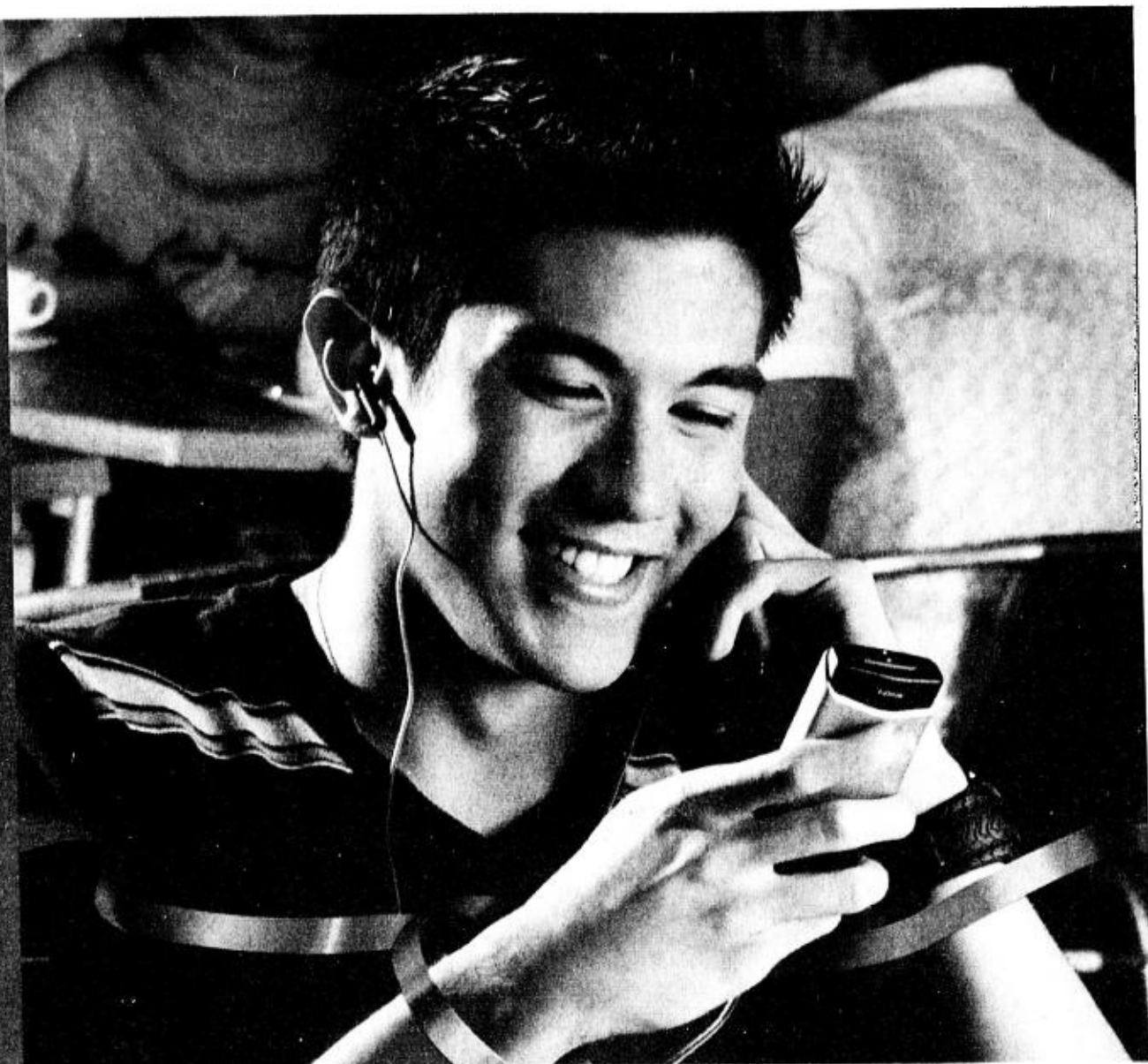
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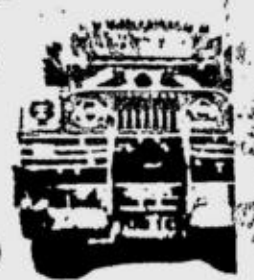
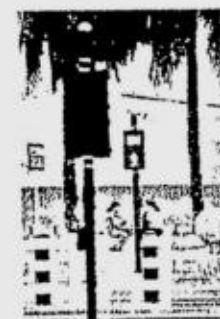
Editor Ester G. Dikapupil

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WHAT'S INSIDE

A new look
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jeepneys

/A20

Search launched
for road heroes /A20A touch
of magic
at Manila's
Baywalk

/A20

NBI agents uncover 'mixed' cement hoard in Metro raids

Adulterated materials threat to public safety

By Tina G. Santos

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (NBI) seized P1.5-million worth of adulterated cement following a series of raids on several establishments last week.

NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division (IPRD) chief Jose Yap said the practice, popularly referred to as "buriki," involves mixing cement with limestone and other filling materials and placing them in sacks that were either stolen or carried fake labels. "The cement does not harden properly and poses a grave threat to public safety," Yap said.

Armed with search warrants issued by the Manila Regional Trial Court Judge Antonio Eugenio Jr., bureau agents swooped down on Starbag Plastic Industries in Valenzuela City where they confiscated more than 150,000 empty counterfeit bags and four rubber stamps used to imprint fake labels on the sacks.

Illegal hoard

In another incident, 560 empty sacks, 139 sacks of limestone and 15 sacks of "mixed" cement were found stored at D4M Trading, a hardware store in Antipolo City last week.

Over 70 empty sacks and a heavy-duty sewing machine used to create the bags were also seized in a sewing facility, also owned by D4M Trading, in Taytay City, the NBI said.

Yap said the erring establishments were subjected to a two-month surveillance operation before they conducted the raids with the help of Republic Cement Corp., Lafarge Holdings Inc. and Fortune Cement Corp., owners of the "Republic," "Phoenix" and "Continental" trademarks. Charges of violation of the intellectual property code are now being readied against the owners of the establishments.

With Jerald Uy, trainee

Patient falls from hospital's third floor

By Nancy C. Carvajal and Jocelyn R. Uy

A 47-YEAR-OLD PATIENT AT THE LUNG CENTER of the Philippines (LCP) in Quezon City fell to his death from the hospital's third floor yesterday.

The patient was identified as Alexander Espino Berenguer, a resident of Tondo, Manila.

Dr. Rey Desales, LCP deputy administrator for medical services, told the INQUIRER that Berenguer had been confined at the charity ward since May 1 for emphysema.

"I was just informed that the patient had suicidal tendencies and had tried to commit suicide by slashing his wrist before he was brought here," said Desales.

A witness said Berenguer jumped from the his room on the third floor.

Before the incident, nurses were looking for Berenguer because he was not in his room. The nurses told police that they thought their patient had escaped because he had reportedly told his wife that he wanted to go home.

Rescue at Roxas

In Pasay City, meanwhile, traffic on Roxas Boulevard was snarled for hours after a man threatened to jump from the roof of a two-story videoke bar on the East Service Road, near the corner of Gil Puyat Avenue, at around 2 p.m.

Rolly Perido, 27, stood on a protruding steel bar at the roof of the Bay Street Karaoke Bar and kept rescuers at bay for about four hours by threatening to jump.

City police chief Senior Supt. Rosendo Franco said Perido had fought with his wife before the incident. The Pasay City Rescue Team and members of the Special Weapons and Tactics Team immediately went to the scene to negotiate with Perido.

"But he was shooting us away. All he said was that he had a fight with his wife," city police chief Senior Rosendo Franco told the INQUIRER.

After a few hours, Perido jumped onto the establishment's concrete signboard, a few feet below the roof, and then onto a nearby ledge, where rescue workers brought him down. He was taken to the Manila Sanitarium later.

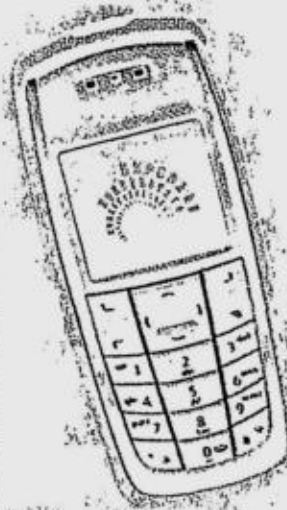
Franco said the the incident slowed traffic along Roxas Boulevard and minor streets in Pasay City because of "kibitzers in the area."

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Transport groups want fare hike

By Daxim L. Lucas

A COALITION OF VARIOUS transport groups is set to file a consolidated petition for a fare hike next week despite the Land Transportation and Franchising Regulatory Board's stand that it will not entertain any petition for an increase until diesel prices hit P35 per liter.

"Diesel fuel is now being sold at P34.77 per liter," said Vigor Mendoza, a lawyer who represents the United Transport Coalition (UTC). "It is already a foregone conclusion that it will go higher than P35."

The UTC is composed of the country's largest public transport groups, operators of buses and jeepneys plying the metropolis.

The group did not say how much it wanted, although the Philippine Confederation of Drivers and Operators-Alliance of Concerned Transport Organization has a pending petition for a P1.50 fare hike for jeepneys.

Know any heroes on the road?

By Jocelyn R. Uy

FILIPINO DRIVERS ARE GENERALLY perceived to be reckless, undisciplined and rude. But they need to be so, because driving in Metro-Manila's streets is not for the faint of heart.

Still, GoodYear Philippines, a top tire manufacturer, has launched a nationwide search for four highway heroes or "Bayani ng Kalsada"—to honor drivers who have performed heroic acts of courage, sacrifice and service while on the road.

"We are launching this search because we want to change the perception of how people look at Filipino commercial drivers," GoodYear marketing director Ron Castro said in an interview.

Those qualified to join are FX or taxi drivers, jeepney drivers, truck or bus drivers and drivers of privately-owned vehicles.

Nominations may be submitted to all GoodYear Servitek and Tyrepro outlets nationwide or at P.O. Box 7260, Domestic Airport, Manila.

A new look for Metro Manila's jeepneys

Color-coded PUJs set them apart from 'colorum' vehicles on the road



COOL CUSTOMER

A woman buys a block of ice from a vendor in a canteen in Manila, where the temperature hits a daily high of 37 degrees Celsius. The weather bureau says it will remain hot in the city until the end of the month.

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE SO-CALLED "KING OF THE ROAD" will soon be getting a makeover, courtesy of the government.

Tourism and transportation officials yesterday launched in Malacañang the "Makisaya, Biyah Na," Jeepney Wrap Stickers project, which aims to draw more tourists to the country, and also get rid of "colorum" or illegal public utility jeepneys (PUJs) in Metro Manila.

The launching was attended by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

New image

Under the project, over 1,000 "Kings of the Road" will get a fresh coat of paint, as well as stickers that promote top tourist destinations in the country.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano said that in line with Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board project, public jeepneys will be "color coded."

Choices

For example, jeepneys plying routes in Makati will be painted blue while those in Manila will be yellow. Quezon City, on the other hand, will have red jeepneys.

So far, Durano said the Depart-

ment of Tourism had made over 180 jeepneys plying the Makati-Taguig route. Next on the list are Manila-bound jeepneys.

There was also a plan to include other public utility jeepneys in "major tourist destinations" outside of Metro Manila, he added.

Icons

"We're just making sure our jeepneys are good to look at because in our source markets in Korea and Europe, the jeepneys are regarded as tourism icons," Durano said.

"When you say Philippines, they think about the Philippine jeepney. It will be an incentive for jeepney drivers if you want us to put stickers and make over your jeepney," he told reporters.

Accreditation

But before they can take part in the program, the jeepneys would have to be accredited by the LTFRB, according to Durano, so that those operating illegally could be weeded out of the ranks of registered public utility jeepneys.

Drivers will also get a vest that matches the color of their jeepney. "We will also give them uniforms so they'll look nice," Durano said.

Sleeping on the job?

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo



activities, my sources say.

Why do Collectors Mangaoang and So refuse to obey orders for their transfer from their superiors?

The two are reportedly not performing well in their present assignments.

The answer is so obvious only an idiot would not know the reason behind the transfer.

Let's talk some more about customs.

Two alleged women smugglers at their piers are using the name of a Cabinet official so their cargoes will not be inspected and will not be given high valuation.

My customs sources say these two women have temporarily taken over from a notorious smuggler who allegedly acted as a front for a brother-sister smuggling team.

The siblings are lying low at the moment, but my spies say they will soon be back with a vengeance.

Customs agents and policemen raided Thursday warehouses inside a compound in Tondo, Manila.

The compound housed several warehouses believed to be the source of smuggled and fake items sold in the malls.

Those smuggled goods could not have been taken out of customs bonded warehouses and the piers if customs intelligence agents were doing their job.

Dino Tuazon, chief of the intelligence division of the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS), seems to be sleeping on the job.

METROBRIEFS

Magic festival

ADD magicians to the entertainers that perform regularly at the Baywalk area on Roxas Boulevard. At 6 p.m. today, the Manila City government will kick off a month-long magic festival which will feature members of the Magicians Foundation Inc., the biggest association of magicians in the country, at the Rajah Sulayman Park. Tents will be set up in the area, featuring puppet shows and face painting from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. For those who would like to learn how to perform magic tricks, workshops will be held on May 14 to 21, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The festival will culminate with another grand magic show on May 27 at 7 p.m.

Tina G. Santos

Marian procession

A DEVOTIONAL procession of Our Blessed Mother will be held at 5:30 a.m. today at the Edsa Shrine plaza as part of a collective prayer for peace and national

Healing every first Saturday of the month. It will be followed by a Mass at 6:30 a.m. and a 16-minute documentary on the shrine, Fr. Vic Apacible, parish priest, said. For information, please call or text 0917-5331926.

Parish concert

TWENTY-ONE choirs from the Good Shepherd Parish of Las Piñas will perform at 8 tonight at the Starmall Activity Hub in Las Piñas City. Titled "Dalawang Dekada," the concert is the highlight of a celebration marking the 20th anniversary of the Good Shepherd Parish. Choirs committee president Tina Montevergen said the concert will feature selected hit songs and dances from the 1980s, when the parish was inaugurated, to 2000. The De La Salle University POPS Orchestra will also perform. "Dalawang Dekada" promises a night of exquisite music, romantic reveries, and fun-filled spiels and numbers that will delight a wide-ranging audience. Tickets will be sold at P100 each.

INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Saturday, May 6, 2006

Sayaw. Drama. Iba.



Shall We Dance?

The Celebrity Dance Challenge

Sunday 9 PM

hosted by Lucy Torres Gomez



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Channel	5:30PM	6:30PM	7:30PM	8:30PM	9:30PM	10:30PM	11:30PM	12:30PM	1:30PM	2:30PM	3:30PM	4:30PM	5:30PM	6:30PM	7:30PM	8:30PM	9:30PM	10:30PM	11:30PM	12:30PM
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AXN		The Amazing Race (Season 10)					Ricky's Believe It or Not	The Amazing Race (Season 10)		When Desolators Strike										
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SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2006

Blair under pressure to quit after poll losses

LONDON—BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair was poised to reshuffle his scandal-plagued Cabinet on Friday after the governing Labor Party suffered heavy losses in local elections across England.

Any shake-up, however, was dismissed by a member of Blair's party as no more than "rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic," with the prime minister under growing pressure to announce a date for his own departure from office.

Results from 151 out of the 176 local authorities in England taking part in the polls showed that Labor had suffered a net loss of

234 council seats.

In contrast, the main opposition Conservatives gained 247 seats, giving a big boost to new leader David Cameron in the first real test of his leadership.

The smaller opposition Liberal Democrats, also with a new leader, had a poor showing, with a net gain of three seats, while the right-wing British National Party did relatively well, capturing at least 13.

The final outcome is due later Friday.

Labor is reeling from two of its darkest weeks since taking office nine years ago, following a raft of

problems including a sex scandal, a foreign prisoner row and financial sleaze allegations.

The bad news has taken its toll, with a growing number of voters shunning Blair's party for the Conservatives.

It took a particularly bad hammering in London, where control of all 32 local authorities was being contested.

Among the casualties, Hammersmith and Fulham, in west London, returned to Conservative control from Labor for the first time since 1968.

Trying to put a brave face on the

bad numbers, Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell blamed her party's recent scandals—namely Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott admitting to an affair with his secretary and Home Secretary Charles Clarke making mistakes in the failed deportation of foreign convicts.

"I don't think that we are going to do as well as we might have hoped to two weeks ago," Jowell told the BBC.

Keen to move on, Blair is expected to gather his ministers together in Downing Street as early as Friday morning for an anticipated Cabinet shake-up.

Frank Dobson, a former Labor

health secretary, however, likened such a gesture to "rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic, or in this case changing the ship's officers on the Titanic."

He told the BBC: "I don't think it will be good enough, quite frankly. We need the party under new management."

A BBC survey revealed on Friday that half of Britain's voters want Blair to quit by the end of the year as they increasingly see him as arrogant, untrustworthy and wrong to support the Iraq war.

Blair, serving his third straight

term, has pledged to stand down ahead of the next general election, due by May 2010 at the latest, with his finance minister, Gordon Brown, seen as his virtually undisputed heir apparent.

The latest local election is not a reflection of the whole of Britain, as Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland did not take part, but the loss of confidence across England will be sorely felt by Labor.

Among the councils that are no longer under the party's control are Derby in central England, Plymouth in the south west and Oldham to the north.

AFP

Jail, death 'with a whimper' for Moussaoui

ALEXANDRIA, VA.—JUDGE Leonie M. Brinkema sentenced Zacarias Moussaoui to prison for the rest of his life on Thursday, saying that he will be denied his wish to die in a blaze of glory and instead "will die with a whimper."

Moussaoui exchanged barbs with the judge, and family members who lost loved ones excoriated him to his face. Moussaoui, in his last chance to be heard in public, delivered a speech about his hatred for America, concluding: "God curse America and save Osama bin Laden. You'll never get him."

Brinkema was clearly angered that when the jury spared Moussaoui's life on Wednesday, he had exulted that "America had lost" and he had won. She told him, "You will spend the rest of your life in a super-maximum security facility. In terms of winners and losers, it's quite clear who won and who lost."

Brinkema, who had been scrupulous about maintaining a neutral stance during the trial, concluded by saying, "As for you, Mr. Moussaoui, you came here to be a martyr and to die in a great big bang of glory, but, to paraphrase the poet T.S. Eliot, instead

you will die with a whimper."

Some family members of Sept. 11 victims in the audience wanted to be heard. Rosemary Dillard, whose husband died on American Airlines Flight 77 when it crashed into the Pentagon, looked at him and said: "I hope that you sit in that jail without seeing the sky, without seeing the sun, without any contact with the world and that your name never comes up in any newspaper again during the rest of my life."

Moussaoui then took the witness before he was sentenced and said that Americans have "an

amount of hypocrisy which is beyond any belief," adding, "Your humanity is a very selected humanity—only you suffer, only you feel."

Moussaoui continued, nonetheless, saying, "You have branded me a terrorist or criminal." In fact, he said, he was a soldier in the Islamic cause and "I fight for my belief." Moussaoui will soon be transferred to the federal "super maximum" prison in Florence, Colo., where he will have no contact with other inmates and will be spoken to only sporadically by guards. *New York Times Service*



JUDGE Leonie Brinkema presiding over the trial of al-Qaida plotter Zacarias Moussaoui in this March 13 courtroom drawing. AFP

WORLD BRIEFS

Toxic water in India

LUCKNOW, India—Millions of people in poverty-ridden northern India are drinking water laced with cancer-causing chemicals, a government minister said Friday. A report released this week by the public works department in India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, said the water was "not fit for human consumption" and could lead to cancer and other illnesses. Contaminants such as arsenic, lead and cadmium were present in groundwater sources tested in 42 out of 70 districts, State Urban Development Minister Mohammed Azam Khan said, describing the findings as "frightening." "Once contaminated, it is very difficult to purify the water," the report added. AFP

De Villepin hits back



DE VILLEPIN REUTERS

Clearstream affair, despite accusations that he has repeatedly deceived parliament and the public. But in a sign of the prime minister's growing isolation, the right-wing newspaper *Le Figaro*—normally a loyal government supporter—published a stinging editorial, joining the Socialist Party (PS) opposition in openly branding him a liar. "Why did he repeatedly—let us dare to say the word—lie about the mention of his ... rival's name in connection with these murky dealings?" the paper asked. AFP

Dozens killed in Iraq

BAGHDAD—At least 28 people were killed across Iraq Thursday amid continued political horse-trading over the formation of the next government with Shiites and Sunnis bickering over key government posts. The US military and Iraqi medics gave differing version of the day's deadliest assault in the restive town of Ramadi, with hospital sources saying 13 civilians had been killed in a US air strike and a US spokesperson saying eight rebels had been killed in a ground assault. Nine people were killed in the capital when a suicide bomber blew himself up in front of a courthouse near the impoverished district of Sadr City in the second suicide attack to cause multiple deaths in Iraq in less than 24 hours. In other attacks, Brig. Gen. Mohammed Raza Abdellatif, who was in charge of logistics for the Iraqi army in Baghdad, was shot dead as he was driving to work. AFP

Suharto hospitalized



SUHARTO REUTERS

JAKARTA—The condition of former Indonesian dictator Suharto remained unstable Friday after he received a blood transfusion following intestinal bleeding, one of his doctors said Friday. Suharto, 84, was rushed to Jakarta's Pertamina hospital late Thursday. "The condition of Mr. Harto has not been stabilized. We are trying to stem the bleeding and giving a gradual transfusion" to increase his level of red blood cells, Mardjono Subandono told a press conference. The former autocrat has been hospitalized several times in the past for intestinal bleeding, stroke and heart problems. Suharto ruled Indonesia with an iron grip for more than three decades, stepping down amid mounting unrest in 1998. He has so far escaped trial for suspected massive corruption on health grounds, with lawyers offering medical evidence that he can no longer hold or follow a normal conversation. AFP



BUDDHA VENERATION

Novice monks pray during a ceremony to celebrate the Buddha's birthday at Chogye temple in Seoul May 5. South Korean Buddhists celebrated the 2,550th anniversary of Buddha's birth at temples across the nation. REUTERS

Use of contraception drops sharply in US

CONTRACEPTION USE HAS DECLINED strikingly over the last decade, particularly among poor women, making them more likely to get pregnant unintentionally and to have abortions, according to a report released Thursday by the Guttmacher Institute.

The decline appears to have slowed the reduction in the national abortion rate that began in the mid-1980s.

"This is turning back the clock on all the gains women have made in recent

decades," Sharon L. Camp, the president of the institute, said.

Among sexually active women who were not trying to get pregnant, the percentage of those not using contraception increased to 11 percent from 7 percent from 1994 to 2001, the latest data available, according to numbers Guttmacher analyzed from the National Survey of Family Growth, a federal study.

The rise was more striking among women living below the poverty line: 14 percent

were not using contraception in 2001, up from 8 percent in 1994. Better-off women—those who earned more than twice the poverty rate—were also less likely to use contraception: 10 percent did not use any in 2001, up from 7 percent in 1994.

The number of white women not using contraception increased to 9 percent from 7 percent; Hispanic women not using it increased to 12 percent from 9 percent; and black women not using it increased to 15 percent from 10 percent. NYT

Berlusconi ally gets 6 years for corruption

ROME—ITALY'S SUPREME COURT upheld a corruption conviction against a close ally of outgoing Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi on Thursday and handed a six-year prison term to Cesare Previti for passing on bribes to judges.

Berlusconi and his business empire were not involved in the case but the two men's legal woes are entwined and they have both regularly accused the Milan magistrates of pursuing them for political motives.

Supporters of Berlusconi, who was dogged by corruption trials during five years in power, leapt on the decision, saying it was linked to the defeat of his center-right coalition in elections last month.

"The era of the center-left starts here," Berlusconi's former lawyer Carlo Taormina, a member of the media tycoon's Forza Italia (Go, Italy!) party, told reporters.

Thursday's verdict is a bitter blow for Previti, a Forza Italia MP who has spent the past 10 years fighting the accusations in Italian courts.

Previti, who was defense minister in Berlusconi's first government in 1994, has no right of ap-

peal but it was not yet clear whether he would go to prison.

Under a law passed by Berlusconi's government, judges can instead put him under house arrest because he is more than 70 years old. The law, which came to be known as "Save Previti," was passed shortly after he turned 71 last year.

"We have been left alone in this battle, abandoned by everyone," said Alessandro Sammarco, one of his lawyers.

Previti's conviction has no direct effect on Berlusconi but a separate decision by the supreme court on Thursday touches more directly on the media tycoon.

The court, in the surprise ruling, said it had asked for a corruption case involving Berlusconi's Fininvest media empire and his publisher Mondadori to be reopened at the appeals stage.

Berlusconi himself cannot be re-tried in the Mondadori case because a statute of limitations has kicked in, but it returns his legal wrangles to the spotlight just as he is trying to regroup the center-right before administrative elections. Reuters



PREVITI, longtime aide of Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi and former defense minister in Berlusconi's first government in 1994. AP

Darfur peace process in crisis

ABUJA—THE AFRICAN UNION'S year-old drive to bring peace to the devastated Sudanese region of Darfur was in crisis once again on Friday, after rebel fighters refused to sign a peace accord.

Despite massive pressure from international mediators, both insurgent groups at peace talks in Abuja defied the third in a series of 48-hour deadlines and rejected a proposed deal with the Khartoum government to end their war.

The chief AU mediator at the talks, Salim Ahmed Salim, said more meetings would resume at 9 a.m. after a stormy overnight session, but sounded far from optimistic about how the negotiations could proceed.

"It was rough and tough. I'm not encouraged. I think we've reached a point of reality," he told reporters at Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo's official residence in Abuja, the current venue of the peace talks.

"We've one consideration in mind, that is the plight of the people of Darfur. It will be a bad day for the people of Darfur if, after all the efforts made and days spent, the (rebel) movements are still wanting," he warned.

Darfur, an arid desert region of western Sudan the size of France or Texas, erupted into civil war in early 2003 when armed local movements rebelled to demand more autonomy from the Arab-led government in Khartoum.

In response, the regime unleashed the Janjaweed militia, which launched brutal attacks against Darfur's largely black African population. The war has caused at least 180,000 deaths and left 2.4 million people homeless.

This week senior international envoys, including US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, came to Abuja to strong-arm the warring parties into a peace deal which would allow humanitarian aid to flow and elections to be held.

The Western diplomats fine-tuned the draft accord, pushing the government to offer better guarantees on the disarmament of the Janjaweed and on recruiting former rebels into the national armed forces.

Following this intervention, Obasanjo and the current AU chair President Denis Sassou-Nguesso of Congo personally hosted Thursday's overnight session in a bid to persuade the parties to accept a deal.

But Mohammed Tugod of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) said the draft peace accord failed to answer his group's demands for Darfur's three states to be united into a single autonomous region. AFP

The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Pope hits China over bishop ordination



POPE Benedict XVI: Displeased with China. AP

VATICAN CITY—POPE BENEDICT SAID ON THURSDAY China's appointment of two Catholic bishops without his blessing was a "grave violation of religious freedom" as a standoff with Beijing over control of church posts escalated.

The bishops were consecrated this week despite Vatican opposition in what was seen as a major setback for relations between the Holy See and China, which had appeared to be improving in recent years.

The Vatican noted that Church law prescribed automatic excommunication for bishops and priests who conduct unauthorized consecrations, but the Pope's spokesperson said the Vatican did not have enough information to decide this at the moment.

"The Holy Father learned the news with deep displeasure," spokesperson Joaquin Navarro-Valls said in an unusually strongly worded statement.

He said the Vatican had information

from China that bishops and priests there had come under "strong pressure and threats" to take part "contrary to their conscience" in the ordinations, which it branded as "illegitimate."

In Catholic moral teaching, someone who does not freely consent to an act might not be fully responsible for it.

Asked by Reuters whether the Church's toughest sanction had been imposed on the bishops, Navarro-Valls indicated that the circumstances of the ordinations were not yet clear.

"That is something that we will think (about) afterward, not at this moment," he said in an interview. "We still don't have all the information."

His statement insisted on "the need to respect the freedom of the Church and the autonomy of its institutions from any external interference" and asked Beijing to stop "such unacceptable acts of violent and intolerable constraint."

The Vatican said the appointments did not help ties with China, which had thawed in recent years, raising expectations that diplomatic relations cut off in 1951 could be restored.

Navarro-Valls said, however, the Vatican would continue to seek dialogue with Beijing.

"This is another obstacle but our style is, nevertheless, to improve the dialogue," he said, speaking in English.

China's 10 million or so Catholics are divided between an "underground" church loyal to the Holy See and the state-approved church that respects the Pope as a spiritual figurehead but rejects effective papal control.

Ma Yingling was ordained bishop in China's southwest Yunnan province on Sunday. Two days later Liu Xinhong was also elevated in the eastern province of Anhui.

China defended the appointments by its state-run Catholic Church, saying they strictly followed democratic processes and fully respected the wishes of a majority of worshippers.

"So the Vatican's condemnation makes no sense," China's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

"We hold a sincere attitude toward improving Sino-Vatican relations and have made active efforts. We hope the Vatican side can support a good environment for improvement of the relationship," it said.

China and the Vatican severed ties after the 1949 Communist takeover and subsequent crackdown on religion. The Vatican switched official recognition to Taiwan, the self-ruled island China says is a breakaway province. **Reuters**

Nepal Maoists agree to peace talks

KATMANDU—NEPAL'S REBEL Maoists agreed Thursday to hold talks on ending their decade-long insurgency, clearing the way for the release of hundreds of jailed fighters.

The new interim Cabinet on Wednesday announced an indefinite ceasefire and removed the terrorist tag from the Maoists to try to kick-start talks and bring peace to the impoverished Himalayan nation.

The Maoists called their own three-month ceasefire last week and on Thursday agreed to discussions on ending the revolt in which over 12,500 people have died.

It is the third time that the government and rebels have called ceasefires at the same time and tried to start peace talks, but on previous occasions, negotiations broke down and the country was plunged back into conflict.

"We are entering into a dialogue process, feeling deep responsibility for people's aspirations toward democracy and peace," said the rebel chief Prachanda, whose name means "the fierce one."

"We hope that the peace talks will not fail this time."

Cabinet Minister Gopal Man Shrestha said earlier that once talks start, the government would release rebel leaders from jails across the country.

Thousands of Maoists have been detained during the insurgency and the interior ministry said up to 700 Maoists, of all ranks, were currently held.

The Royal Nepalese Army website details 53 people on its "most wanted" list of Maoists, headed by Prachanda.

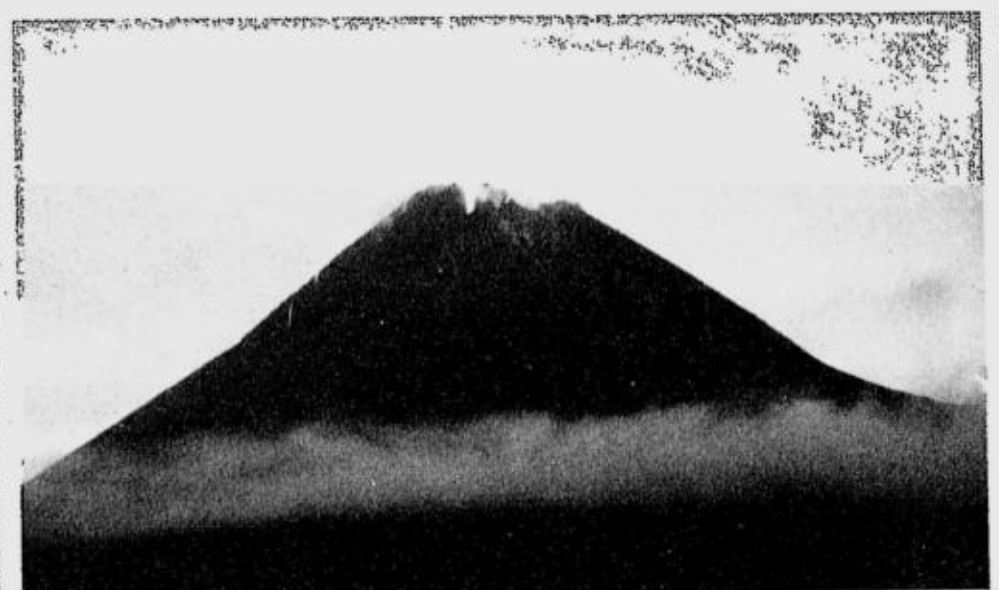
Once deadly foes, the political parties and the Maoists late last year brokered a

loose alliance against King Gyanendra to challenge his absolute rule proclaimed in February 2005. They brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets.

The monarch, the constitutional head of the army, backed down in the face of mass protests, which left at least 17 people dead, and recalled parliament last week after a four-year break.

The politicians immediately backed plans to call elections to a body to rewrite the constitution and limit the powers of the king—a key demand of the Maoists who began their "people's war" in 1996 to overthrow the monarchy.

Constant battles between the rural-based Maoists and the security forces have resulted in a stalemate although Gyanendra had vowed to crush the rebellion after he sacked the government. **AFP**



FURIOUS

Mount Merapi in Sleman district of Central Java province erupts May 5. More than 5,000 Indonesians have fled their homes as the first lava flow oozed from the volcano. **AFP**

SANYO



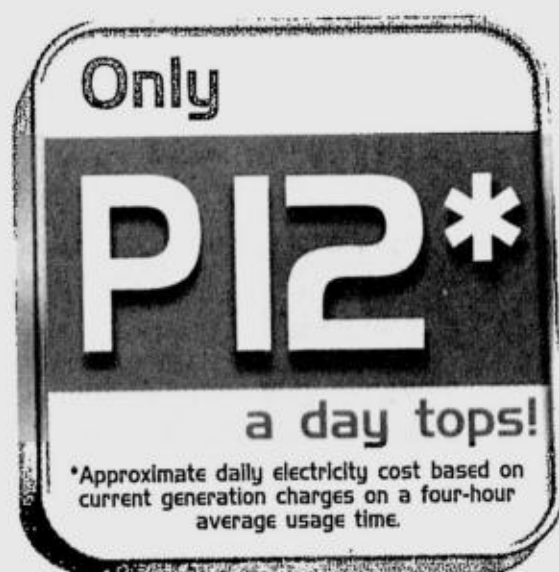
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to frown,



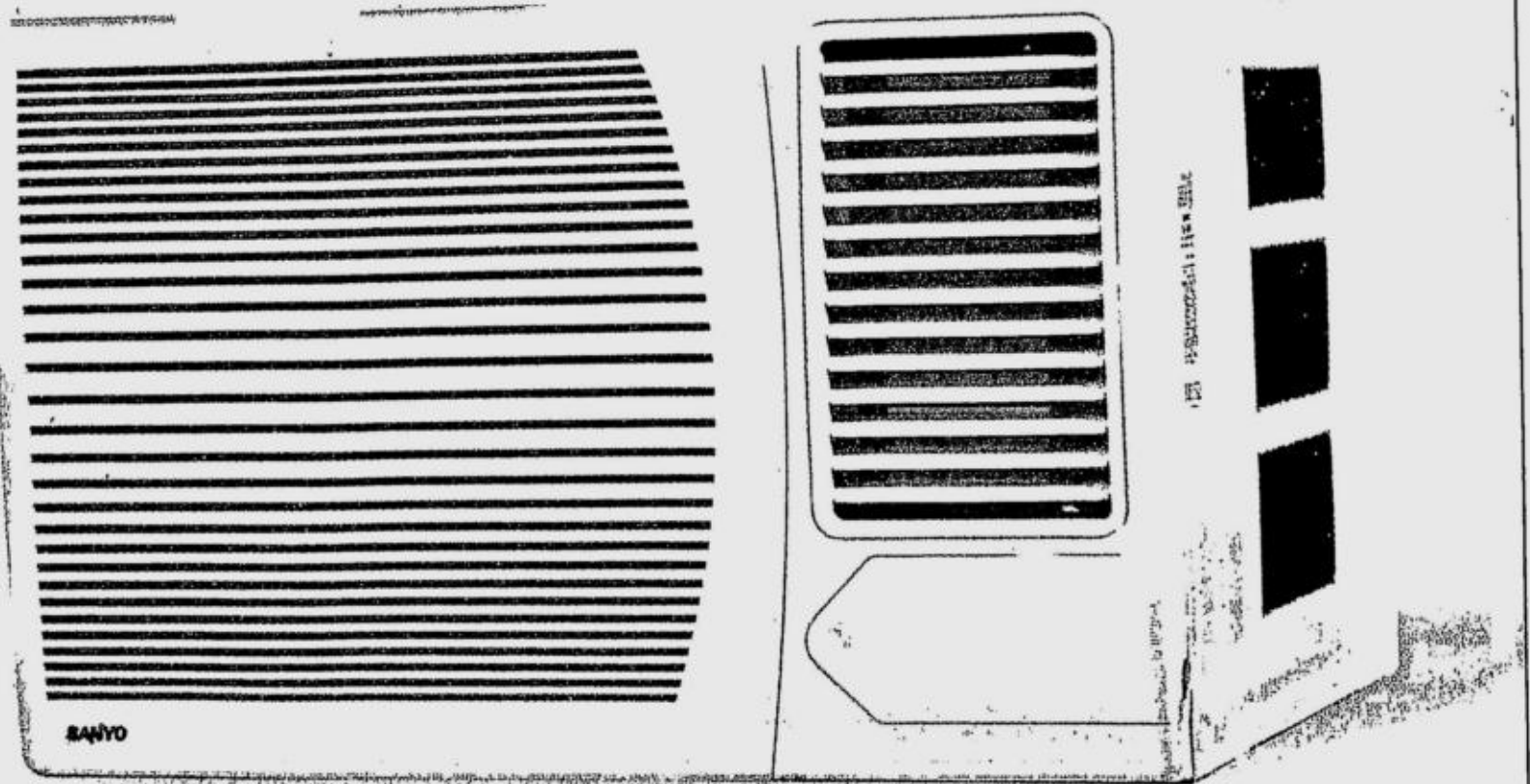
but only
17 muscles
to smile,



what does
it take to
keep your cool?



That's how little it costs to run your Sanyo airconditioner to give the cooling level you desire.



Model SA-186P

Safety electric shock protector • Low noise compressor • Aluminum fins on condenser & evaporator • High current protector • Washable air filter • Double insulation AC cord



RODEL Mayol (right) and Eagle Kyowa are ready to rumble.

Mayol underdog in Tokyo title bid

By Recah Trinidad

TOKYO—EVERYBODY IS GOING out, weather cool and crisp, Tokyo is in the grip of a spring fever but there'll be no walk in the park when Rodel Mayol of the Philippines goes for the World Boxing Council minimumweight championship at the Korakuen Hall here tonight.

Despite a better record (22-0, with 17 KOs), the unbeaten May-

ol remained the underdog after official weigh-in yesterday for his challenge against defending champion Eagle Kyowa, a Thai (Del Delaphan) who fights with a Japanese tag.

Although handlers had initially expressed apprehension over excess poundage, the 24-year-old Mayol downed a big, steaming bowl of ramen (Japanese noodle soup) on the eve of the

MAYOL/A26

By Jasmine W. Payo

ANTIPOLO CITY—PROPPED UP BY THEIR tough defense in the closing minutes, the Purefoods Chunkee Giants halted San Miguel's seven-game winning streak with an 82-75 decision in the Gran Matador Brandy PBA Philippine Cup yesterday at the Ynares Center.

"There was no way we can beat San Miguel if we challenged them in a shooting game," said Giants coach Ryan Gregorio, adding that San Miguel averages 95.2 points per game.

More than just ending the longest winning run of the season, Gregorio said the Giants pushed aside distractions to grab a share of the lead with the Beermen at 9-3.

"We know the odds were against us coming in-

to this game," said Gregorio. "We've always had a hard time beating San Miguel, we've always had a hard time playing here (in Ynares). There were so many (distractions). But we were so focused on playing hard and winning the game."

James Yap topscored for the Giants by pumping in 11 of his 19 points in the second half.

Dorian Peña's inside presence for the Beermen put the Giants' lead in jeopardy, 71-70, early in the fourth quarter.

But Kerby Raymundo hit key baskets at the low-post and the Giants held the Beermen scoreless in the last three minutes of play for the win.

The Giants fought the Beermen toe-and-nail late in the first half. Led by Marc Pingris, who

GAME TODAY
(Davao City)
4:30 p.m.—Ginebra
vs Sta. Lucia

drilled in six straight points in the second quarter, the Giants trimmed the Beermen's lead to three, 37-34.

In the second game, Red Bull nailed its first back-to-back victories in the conference, pouncing on an Air21 squad that was firing blanks to hammer out-

a 113-87 rout.

Red Bull went 6-6, dropping Air21 to 4-8.

The scores:

First Game

PUREFOODS 82—J. Yap 19, R. Limpot 10, Raymundo 10, Simon 7, Evangelista 7, Artadi 6, Oingris 6, Gamboa 2, Yee 2.

SAN MIGUEL 75—Seigle 21, Peña 19, Ildefonso 9, Calagulo 8, Hontiveros 8, Racela 6, Adriano 2, Noble 2, Cablay 0.

Quarters: 18-23, 44-41, 69-64, 82-75

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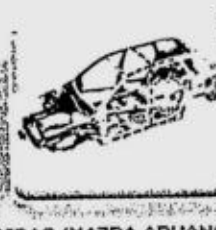
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SPORTS

Aribal homers power
Air21-AdU past Manila

By Marc Anthony Reyes

KAREN ARIBAL HOMERED IN THE FOURTH and sixth innings, capping a seven-run Air21-Adamson burst, as the Lady Falcons came from behind to defeat Manila, 10-5, in the Philippine Open women's softball championship at the Rizal Memorial Stadium.

Ma. Lisa Gaylon, Lovely Paruhinog, Sara Jane Agravante, Mary Joy Lasquete and Josel Aguilar also scored a run each from the fourth inning as Air21-Adamson burst from a 3-5 deficit en route to its fifth victory against a draw.

The Lady Falcons' fiery binge silenced Manila whose Nelsa dela Gente blasted a grand slam home-run in the third inning to give the host squad the upperhand, 5-3.

"It (Dela Gente homer) was spectacular but it wasn't enough to dishearten Air21-Adamson," said Manila coach Anna Santiago, herself a former Adamson standout in the UAAP.

Aribal's first blasted a 1-1 pitch in the fourth inning to the backcourt of the Rizal Aquatics Center. And then, after Gaylon, Paruhinog, Agravante, Lasquete and Aguilar made it 9-5, Aribal whacked starter Felixwinda Custodio's 1-1 pitch to left field.

GAMES TODAY
(PUP Grounds)
Men: 7 a.m.—PUP vs Bulacan; 8:30 a.m.—RTU vs UST; 10 a.m.—Cebu vs Davao.
(Rizal Memorial Field)
Women: 7 a.m.—UP-Air Force vs RTU; 8:30 p.m.—Bacolod Jr vs Bacolod Sr; 10 a.m.—Laguna vs Bulacan; 11:30 a.m.—PUP vs Manila; 1 p.m.—Bacolod Jr vs Air21-AdU; 2:30 p.m.—Laguna vs RTU; 4 p.m.—PUP vs Bacolod Sr; 6 p.m.—Manila vs Bulacan

Later in the day, Air21-Adamson walked over Bacolod Senior, the Delaware-bound World Series aspirant, which opted to default all its remaining games in order to take part in the Palang Pambansa in Nagasaki City this weekend.

UP-Air Force kept pace with Air21-Adamson by white-washing both PUP and Bulacan, 7-0.

With five wins and one draw apiece, Air21-Adamson and UP-Air Force are now assured of the top two slots in the Page System finals.

Manila, which will represent the Philippines in the World Series in August in Kalamazoo, Michigan, whipped Bacolod Junior, 4-0, to take No. 3 slot. Bacolod Junior, also off to the Kirkland, Maryland World Series, secured the No. 4 slot.

'Who cares
about Rodman?'

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

UNTIL HE PHONED us to complain about his P3,500 monthly pension, which the Philippine Sports Commission stopped more than three months ago, I was under the impression that this 73-year-old former Olympian was comfortably well-off.

I was wrong. Mr. Olympian told me that he and his colleagues—some of them bedridden and debilitated—direly needed the pension, though paltry.

"They said the PSC budget was drastically cut, that's why the pension for the Olympic and Asian Games medalists was also cut. From what I know, the budget for the pension comes from the Pagcor (Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.), which continues to subsidize the PSC. Could you ask PSC chairman Butch Ramirez (on our behalf), please?" implored the former Olympian.

I have been trying to reach Mr. Ramirez through calls and texts using the number given to me by a colleague, but so far, no answer.

Reacting to our item on the Rodmans in last Wednesday's column, INQUIRER LIBRE sports editor Dennis Eroa wrote us to relate his personal experience with Philander and son. Incidentally, I was told by colleagues that during the "Bad Boy Tour" press conference held at The Gateway in Cubao, Quezon City, Dennis Rodman's bodyguard approached the members of the media and warned each one of them: Don't ask Dennis questions about his father. He said the presscon would be terminated if anybody did.

Well, one broadcaster had the guts to tell the bodyguard that he had no right to dictate what the Filipino media should ask. The broadcaster then proceeded to ask Dennis about his father.

Dennis answered, then stood up and walked out.

Here's Dennis Eroa's letter:

Madam Beth:

They call him Pily.

I'm referring, of course, to Philander, Dennis Rodman's estranged father.

Very few knew that the INQUIRER actually first broke the news, in 1988, that the ex-Chicago Bulls superstar has a father living in Angeles City, near the former Clark Air Base.

Philander actually broke his leg in a motorcycle accident. I'm not sure whether he has fathered 26 children, but one thing is sure, he abhors family planning. He's prolific.

I interviewed him at the bar he owned. The bar was festooned with Rodmaniana.

Even then, he dreamed of patching up things with Dennis.

Mind you, the Bad Boy Tour wasn't the first time Philander had tried to seek an audience with his son. He even went to a Bulls game but failed to come within a whisker of his son.

Now, did you know that another son named Philander II actually saw action in the PBL. At 5-foot-9, Philander II, or Potpot to friends, was an instant attraction for the now-defunct Chowking team.

But he was too small to be a forward, too slow to be a point guard. Still, he was able to see action in the 1998 PBL Vismin Cup.

Potpot never made it to a PBL Conference, but he managed to land in the news.

One lazy afternoon, I received a frantic call from Potpot who said he was being detained in a Makati City police station.

Reason: he was caught setting fire to the control panel of the elevator that serviced Chowking's quarters.

I guess controversies are part and parcel of the Rodman bloodline. From what I heard, Dennis Rodman treated the Mandaua City hosts of the Bad Boy Tour with disdain. Even in Manila, Dennis was hardly approachable to rabid basketball fans.

Who cares?

MANILA'S Felixwinda Custodio (14) and Patricia Dimal (8) collide trying to steal and return to third base during a Bacolod squeeze play. At center Bacolod shortstop Cindy Carol Banay.

ROMY HOMILLADA

Capitol pair gains final 4

By Musong R. Castillo

BORACAY ISLAND, Aklan—CAPITOL University of Cagayan de Oro claimed another heavyweight foe yesterday and advanced to the men's Final Four of the 10th Nestea Beach Volley championships here.

St. Francis of Assisi fell to the unheralded pair of Orpheus Cubillas and Jose Carlos Cagadas, 22-25, even as defending champion St. Benilde marched to the semifinals via the backdoor after a 25-20 victory over University of San Jose-Recoletos.

Capitol U next tangles with Adamson, another side literally made up of big, powerful players, for a seat in the title game after the Falcons cruised past University of San Carlos, 25-18, in a quarterfinal match that lasted only 14 minutes.

Final Four play is set in the morning today with the Blazers, the reigning NCAA champions tackling Mindanao State U.

MSU took out tournament favorite and 2002 champion Foundation U, 25-20, in one of the most-watched matches on Day 2.

Repeat-seeking St. Benilde, represented by Janley Patrona and Pio de Castro, did not qualify as its group's top team and needed to win an extra game in the losers' bracket yesterday morning before scoring that convincing victory over USJR.

"That's how the sport is," said Patrona in Filipino. "Breaks can really decide the outcome of beach volleyball games."

St. Benilde lost its afternoon match Thursday, 23-25. The school is actually in a position to nail a golden double after the Lady Blazers advanced to the semifinals by



UNIVERSITY of San Agustin's Nerissa Bautista hits the fine sands of Boracay to return a placement shot against the Adamson U tandem. San Agustin prevailed, 25-22.

ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

crushing University of Mindanao-Tagum, 25-16, in just 18 minutes.

University of Southern Philippines sealed a semifinal clash with the Lady Blazers after outsteading the University of the Visayas, 25-22.

USJR's lady bets and University of San Agustin made up the other semifinal pair-

ing after taking a 25-14 and 25-22 decisions over University of Mindanao-Davao and the Lady Falcons, respectively.

Cubillas and Cagadas trailed by as many as three points early, but the rookies plodded along, finally gaining momentum and the upper hand at 18-17.

The tournament is sponsored by

Speedo, MTV, Power Shot, Hey Jude, Mikasa, Cebu Pacific, Seventeen, D-Mall, Villa De Oro, ClubTen, Schering-Plough Coppertone, Crystal Sand Resort, Click-the-city.com, Boracay Gold Crown Club, Bantay Kalikasan ABS-CBN Foundation, Nautilus by PJ Aranador, Le Soleil of Boracay and La Salle Green Hills.

Bigger, better
6th JVC Open
gets off ground

By Jasmine W. Payo

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SHOWED YESTERDAY how bright the country's future will be. Well for badminton, at least, as they shared amusing anecdotes during the official launch of the JVC Open Badminton Championships.

"The popularity of badminton started when I picked it up," Rep. Teddy Boy Locsin said in jest during the media briefing at the Renaissance Hotel in Makati City.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay also shared interesting observations of his own.

"There was a reduction of unused warehouses because they've been converted to badminton courts," said Binay.

Both badminton enthusiasts, Locsin and Binay expressed support for the sixth edition of the prestigious badminton championships, which is expected to draw more than 2,000 participants nationwide.

"There will be regional competitions in Cebu, Pampanga and Davao," said JVC president and CEO Hideyuki Takato.

The elimination round of the JVC Open Badminton Championships will be on June 25 to July 1 at PowerSmash.

Iligan scuttles Pangasinan five

ILIGAN CITY—THE ILIGAN CRUSADERS spoiled the start of Pangasinan Hundred Islands' southern swing by scoring a 78-68 victory Tuesday in the 2006 Guerrero Brandy-NBC national basketball championship at the MSU-IIT gym here.

Ronnie Matias and playmaker Marlon Kalaw sparked as the Crusaders posted their fifth win in eight games to tie idle North Cotabato for second spot in the tournament sponsored by Panasonic, Sulpicio Lines, Nature's Spring Mineral Water, Spring Cooking Oil, Regent Foods, Firefly Lightings, Molten and Prime Channel.

Matias won player of the game honors with 12 points and eight rebounds.

STANDINGS	W	L
North Division		
Bacchus/Harbour	4	2
Batang Tagaytay	4	3
Forward Taguig	3	2
Spring P'riaque	2	3
Pangasinan	1	4
Laguna-S. Rosa	0	6
South Division		
Ozamiz Cotta	4	0
Iligan Crusaders	5	3
North Cotabato	5	3
Pagadian	4	2
Valencia	2	3
Iloilo Warriors	1	4

The Firefly Lightings-backed Crusaders of Mayor Lawrence Cruz made up in offense what they lacked in rebounding to hold off the taller Pangasinenses of Mayor Hernani Braganza and team manager Rosendo So.

The scores:
ILIGAN 78—Kalaw 14, Matias 12, Hubalde 10, Micadao 10, Go 9, Ilagan 8, Omiping 8, Ayodelle 4, Canoy 0, Taguines 0, Gandarosa 0, Oliveros 0, Espinosa 0, Sagad 0.

PANGASINAN 68—Ruiz 15, Re Menor 14, Lopez 11, Rol Menor 11, Aquino 9, Zagala 4, Marzan 2, Balares 2, Tolentino 1, Tiongson 0, Yambao 0, Tan 0, Codamon 0.

Quarters: 20-16, 40-37, 57-52, 78-68

San Beda shoots for Cup sweep

GAMES TODAY (San Juan gym)
2 p.m.—San Beda vs La Salle (All-Stars)
4 p.m.—Ateneo vs San Beda (High School)

THIS IS FOR ALL THE MARBLES.

San Beda's Red Lion All-Stars and Red Cubs shoot for both crowns today in the maiden Total-Filoli-Flying V Home-grown Cup at the San Juan gym.

Out to deny the Red Lions, powered by Sonny Manucat and Brit Reroma, in

the alumni final at 2 p.m. are the La Salle Green Archers.

Meanwhile, the Red Cubs collide with the Ateneo Eaglets for the high school title at 4 p.m. after the Eaglets shocked La Salle Green Hills in a playoff, 59-57.

League commissioner Virgil Villavicencio thanked sponsors led by Shell and Globe and backers Sunbolt, Immovit, Accel, Inihaw Circle, Bank of Commerce, Banco de Oro, PBCOM, Gerry's

Grill, X-24, Security Bank and Millennium Plans.

Villavicencio also praised the support of Filoli CEO Raffy Villavicencio.

The scores:
ATENEU 59—Rivera 27, Austria 9, Gonzaga 8, Balmaceda 6, Gamboa M. 4, Kalipunan 3, Golla 1, Gamboa K. 1, Esquivel 0, Aportadera 0, Dumirique 0.
LA SALLE 57—Salva 19, Ferdinand 9, Reyes 8, Liwag 6, Crespo 5, Sia 5, De Guzman 5, Gulao 0.
Quarters: 12-14, 26-26, 45-41, 59-57

Petron volley at Baywalk

THE MANILA BAYWALK CAME ALIVE WITH gorgeous beach volleyball babes strutting their stuff, and throngs of Manilaños appreciating the top-rate action on the sandcourt when the 2nd leg of the 2006 Petron Ladies Beach volleyball tournament unfolded Friday. Manila Sports Council chair Ali Atienza made the ceremonial toss of the two-day volleyball fiesta, backed by Petron with support from Asian College of Science and Technology (AcSAT), Speedo (official outfitter), Mikasa (official ball) and Action and Fitness Magazine. Leading the 20-women, 10-team cast are national team pool member Thelma Barina and the Philippine School of Business Administration's Jessica Ticala.

MisOr cagers take opener

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—POINT GUARD Ramil Tagupa lifted Pryce Pharma-MisOr past heavily favored PacMan-GenSan, 64-51, for a 1-0 lead Thursday in their best-of-three Mindanao Division semifinal series of the ML Kwart Padala Mindanao Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) First Conference at the General Santos City Gym.

Tagupa exploded for eight points in a crushing 11-0 run that broke the game wide open with 1:33 to play, 62-49. He capped Pryce Pharma's onslaught with a triple, much to the

delight of team owner and MVBA chair Gov. Oscar Moreno who was in attendance.

Pryce Pharma raced to a 25-14 edge after the first period behind the 12 points of strongman Jessie Lumantas.

PacMan's 51-point output shattered the MVBA record for least points in a game previously held by West Negros College.

PacMan team owner and boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao played in his second game, scoring the team's first basket via a side jumper at the 8-minute mark.

De Guzman,
Ikeda score
playoff wins

REGINA DE GUZMAN AND FIL-JAPANESE Chihiro Ikeda edged separate opponents in sudden-death playoff to rule their respective divisions in the recent fifth leg of the Samsung Jungolf Tour at Wack Wack.

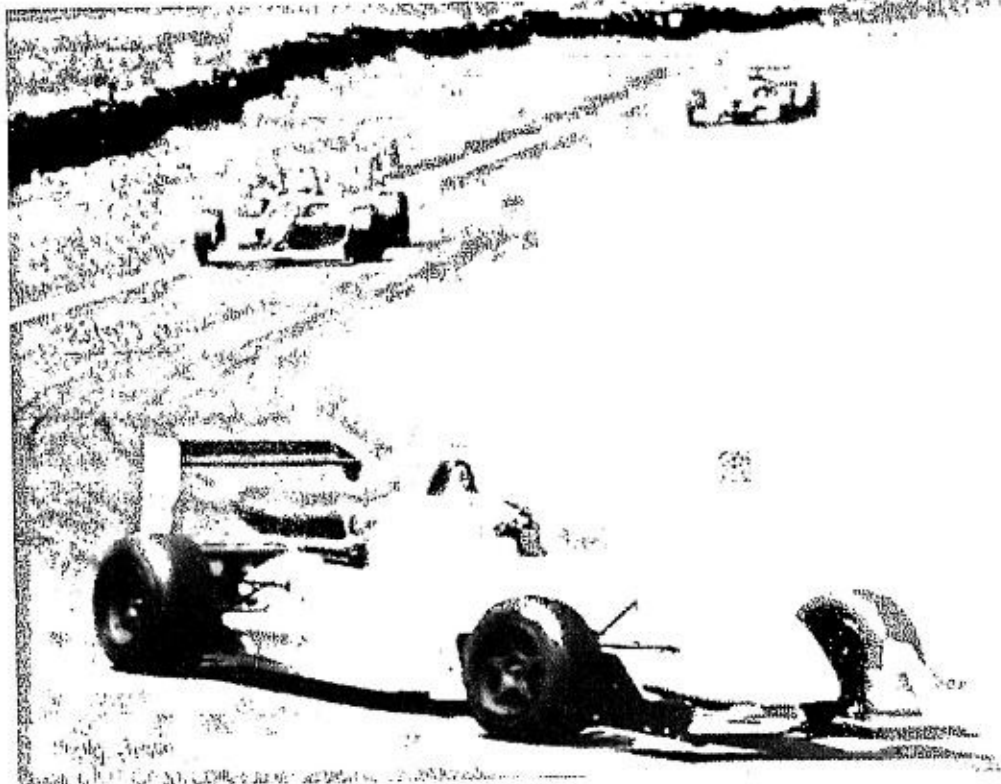
De Guzman eagled the extra hole, the par-5 10th, to beat Paulina Sotto for the girls Class A plum while Ikeda turned back Frances Bawal in a similar playoff for the girls Class B crown.

Lawrence Celestino (boys Class B) and Korean Kim Ho Joon (boys Class A) topped their age-groups by a mere stroke in the tourney that marked the return of Wack Wack as host of the jungolf summer circuit.

Celestino rallied from nine strokes down with a 71 in the final round to win over Chun In-seong by a stroke in the event backed by Samsung and Philippine Airlines. Callaway, Tideist, Mizuno, La Jolla, Taylor Made, Wilson, Ping, Auto Magic, Unilever, MCCI Air Liquid, INQUIRER Golf and Michael Guy are the other sponsors.

STANDINGS	W	L
Visayas Division		
M. Lhuillier-Cebu	7	0
Cebu Landmaster	4	2
Mantaw Traders	3	4
Toyota-Iloilo	1	5
West Negros	0	4
Mindanao Division		
Semifinals: No. 1 seed Iligan City 0, No. 4 Montaña-Davao 1; No. 2 PacMan-GenSan 0, No. 3 Pryce Pharma-MisOr 1		
GAME TODAY		
5:30 p.m.—WNC vs. Cebu Landmaster-Toledo		

Sy quickest in practice; Peña 2nd



TYSON Sy heads the AF3 practice race at the Batangas Racing Circuit yesterday.

ROSARIO, BATANGAS—TYSON SY AND DADO PEÑA CONTINUED TO SHOW the way in practice runs Friday, raising hopes a Filipino driver would score a big victory in the opening round of the 2006 Asian Formula Three series Saturday at the Batangas Racing Circuit here.

For the second straight day, Sy, 18, logged the fastest lap time of one minute 28.182 at the 3.4-kilometer circuit, with Peña, of Team Goddard, not far behind at 1:28.226.

The rest of the drivers, including the foreign contingent, were not far behind going into the qualifying series Saturday morning that will determine the grid positions for the opening round later in the afternoon.

Briton James Winslow of JA Motorsports was third fastest in the practice runs with a time of 1:29.063, followed by Irishman Ali Jackson of Aran Racing (1:29.358), Speedtech's Moreno Soeprapto (1:29.605), Briton Dillon Battistini of JA Motorsports (1:29.729), last year's runner-up Irishman John O'Hara of Aran Racing (1:29.868), Team Indonesia's Joson F3's Bagoes Hermanto (1:32.18) and brother Satrio Hermanto (1:32.51).

Team Goddard's Michele Bumgarner, trying her hands in AF3 after dominating last year's karting series, clocked 1:32.997 while fellow lady driver Gaby de la Merced of Speedtech Asia, another newcomer, clocked 1:34.703. JP Tuason of Tuason Racing School logged 1:35.577.

Another Filipino, 2003 champ Pepon Marave, failed to join the rest in morning practice runs, his car still in the pit being repaired by mechanics after it was hit in practice by Jackson on Thursday.

Although the races are fast shaping up to be a duel between the Pinoy young guns, Peña said he expects the other drivers to push harder, especially during the qualifying session of the series backed by PLDT myDSL, PLDT MyPAD, Yokohama Tires, Lima City Hotel, Denso Spark Plugs, Big Shot Billiards, Suzuki, Oxy Enhanced Water, Ford, Tuason Racing School and Mossimo.

Highlights of the opening round will be shown on Sunday from 10:30 a.m. to noon. The next two rounds Sunday will be broadcast live. Racing enthusiasts can log on to www.asianf3.net for updates.

"I and Tyson are really close but I'm quite shocked why the other drivers are a little far off," said Peña, who clocked the fastest lap time of 1:28.6 in practice runs later in the afternoon.

"But you'll never know. I think they'll come out fast later and close the gap. I think I can push harder."

All cars will run with new tires for the qualifying run and this should translate into faster times, with Sy, fourth overall last year and winner of two rounds in Indonesia, confident he can still improve his clocking.

"Kaya pa. Mas magiging maganda pa 'yung time sa mga susunod na labas," said Sy, adding he would aim for at least second on the starting grid.

Winslow, third overall last year, is also confident he would come up with better times, especially in the qualifying session.

Michele takes challenge of F3 racing

THE BUMGARNER SIBLINGS—Michele and Mark—are back following their fruitful karting stint in Italy and will try their driving mettle with cars.

Michele, the Asian Karting Queen, takes the challenge of driving a formula car against top caliber male rivals in the 2006 Asian Formula 3 kicking off today at the Batangas Racing Circuit in Rosario, Batangas.

Mark, on the other hand, gets his

hands on a fast race car as he debuts in the Touring Car Championship after competing in the Ford Lynx Cup last year.

Testing her formula car in the past two days, Michele surprised everyone, including the veteran F3 drivers, as she managed a quite fast average lap time of 1:32.08.

Bumgarner, who's backed up by the Department of Tourism, Petron, Accel, Salon Prive, Gold's Gym, Oakley, City

Kart Racing, and Jones Parrish Barlow Financial Services, will be running alongside Dado Peña for Team Goddard.

"That was so inspiring and I just couldn't wait to get into the actual race," said Michele, who added another feather on her cap by being appointed as a Goodwill Ambassador of Welfare and Sports recently by the Department of Tourism.

She's under the tutelage of former AF3 champ Mark Goddard.



BUMGARNER

European Union Cup up

THREE CLASSY IMPORTS AND two battle-scarred locals head the field of challengers for the annual European Union Cup, a featured cup race marking the celebration of Europe Month in the Philippines today at the Santa Ana Park.

Spearheaded by the European Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines and the European Commission, the 1,500-meter event will

stake P200,000 in guaranteed prize money to the winner sponsored by Philippine Racing Club Inc.

Competing are imports Colombia Breeze (NZ), Frosty Bally (Aus) and Good Landing (Aus), as well as local-breds Native Land and defending cup champion Hellfire. Good Landing (Aus), racing under the banner of businessman-sportsman Aristeo Puyat, looms as the early favorite.

Benitez tops Shell karting



BENITEZ

approaching the finish line and clock 14:48.208, just 0.278 second ahead of Alvarez.

"I just kept that strong fighting spirit throughout the race, I never really thought I could win," said Benitez. "But when I got that close to John (Alvarez), I knew I could overtake him."

"He has improved a lot," said Elson Carpio, the Jet Racing head coach. "Attitude-wise, he's more matured, more fiery."

It was a classic come-from-behind triumph as Benitez, backed by Bingo Bonanza Corp., Henry Sy Jr. of SM companies and Willy Ocier of Pacific Online Systems Corp. and Belle Corp., was at sixth place going to the third lap of the race.

Benitez moved up to third place on the 10th lap, which saw polesitter Juha Turalba got pulled out of the running following a collision with Alvarez. Benitez seized the opportunity and stuck close to Alvarez on the next lap.

Alvarez held on to the pole after the last curve going to the finish line, but Benitez pulled the crucial maneuver to complete his conquest.

SPORTSWATCH

Tukaan derby at Roligon

THE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND OF ROLIGON MEGA Cockpit's Tukaan 5-cock derby, which attracted a big field of 206 entries, starts today with more than 100 fights on tap. Main sponsors are Lakpue Drug Inc. and Thunderbird Enerstone. Host Rolly Ligon said that today's fastest win champion will drive home a brand new Toyota Innova. Ed Patarawan of Bulacan (EMP II), who won a Toyota Innova in last month's Largahan derby, is among the qualifiers today with two points and may win another Innova. For details, call 851-2275, 833-1638 and 852-9812.

Makati 6-cocker resumes

MAKATI COLISEUM'S BLOCKBUSTER COCKFEST, the 317-entry Summer Salpukan 6-cock derby resumes at 2 p.m. today with more than 100 encounters lined up. The event is the fifth and last round of eliminations of the derby sponsored by B-Meg Derby Ace. The championship rounds are scheduled on May 11 and 13. Unheralded entries dominated last Thursday's elimination. Scoring three wins each were Dexter Sacosan (Hard Cuts), Lito Joseph (Maverick), Wilmer Ting of Davao City (Davao Gold), Louie Cua (LCC) and Elren Canlas of Pampanga (Mayo Kinse Makati). Promoters are Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud and William Co.

Lagon, Marzo join SJC tilt

POPULAR SWEATER MAN SONNY LAGON AND 2005 World Slasher Cup champ Boy Marzo are among the early birds who confirmed their participation in the SJC 9-Cock International Derby slated June 5, 7 and 9 at San Juan Coliseum. Sagupaan Complex or 3000 is the sponsor. Lagon, in partnership with Gerry Ramos, recently won the Super Big Event 7-cock derby. Lagon will be partnered by Bruce Barnette of Alabama who is known as the US Sweater man. Marzo, who topped the 2005 World Slasher Cup first leg, will get support from his Japanese partner Morinobu Taniguchi. Pit manager Pit Rivera said guaranteed prize is P5 million for an entry fee of P55,000.

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SPORTS

Shaq fuels Heat surge

NJ Nets usher undermanned Pacers to exit

CHICAGO—MIAMI'S SHAQUILLE O'Neal and New Jersey's Richard Jefferson each scored 30 points Thursday, sparking road triumphs that advanced their teams to a National Basketball Association playoff showdown.

O'Neal sank 13-of-24 shots, pulled down 20 rebounds, dished off five assists and blocked two shots in 38 minutes to lead the Miami Heat past the Chicago Bulls, 113-96.

"When I was in the game my guys were looking for me," O'Neal said. "I was getting the ball in the right spots then I was able to get my shots and hit them."

Jefferson and Vince Carter, who scored 24 points, ignited the Nets past host Indiana, 96-90.

Second seed Miami and third seed New Jersey each won their best-of-seven opening-round series four games to two and booked an Eastern Conference semifinal matchup. The Nets went 3-1 against the Heat during the season.

"We're very confident," O'Neal said. "A lot of times we get into trouble we make a lot of silly mistakes. We play with a lot of energy. The games we are supposed to win, we almost always win those games."

Detroit will face Cleveland or Washington in the other Eastern semifinal. The Cavaliers own a 3-2 edge on the Wizards, who host game six Friday.

O'Neal turned back the clock to his Los Angeles Lakers days of dominating rivals with ease, the three-time NBA Finals Most Valuable Player avoiding foul trouble to oust the Bulls.

"If I'm on the court and I'm active

that's how it's going to be most of the time," O'Neal said. "Games two, three, four and five I was in foul trouble. Tonight I wasn't in foul trouble so I could do what I do."

The Heat, losers in all nine prior NBA playoff games at Chicago, never trailed. They built a 55-41 half-time lead and kept the Bulls to 32 percent first-half shooting.

"We started the game extremely well," Heat coach Pat Riley said. "We weren't turning it over and we were scoring. They were missing a lot of shots. We came out and established ourselves. They seemed a little tight in the beginning."

Dwyane Wade scored 23 points and showed little sign of the bruised hip he suffered in Game 5. Udonis Haslem added 17 points and 14 boards for the Heat.

"Our coaches will have a great game plan put together," Wade said. "No matter where the games in the next series are played, at home or on the road they will be great games."

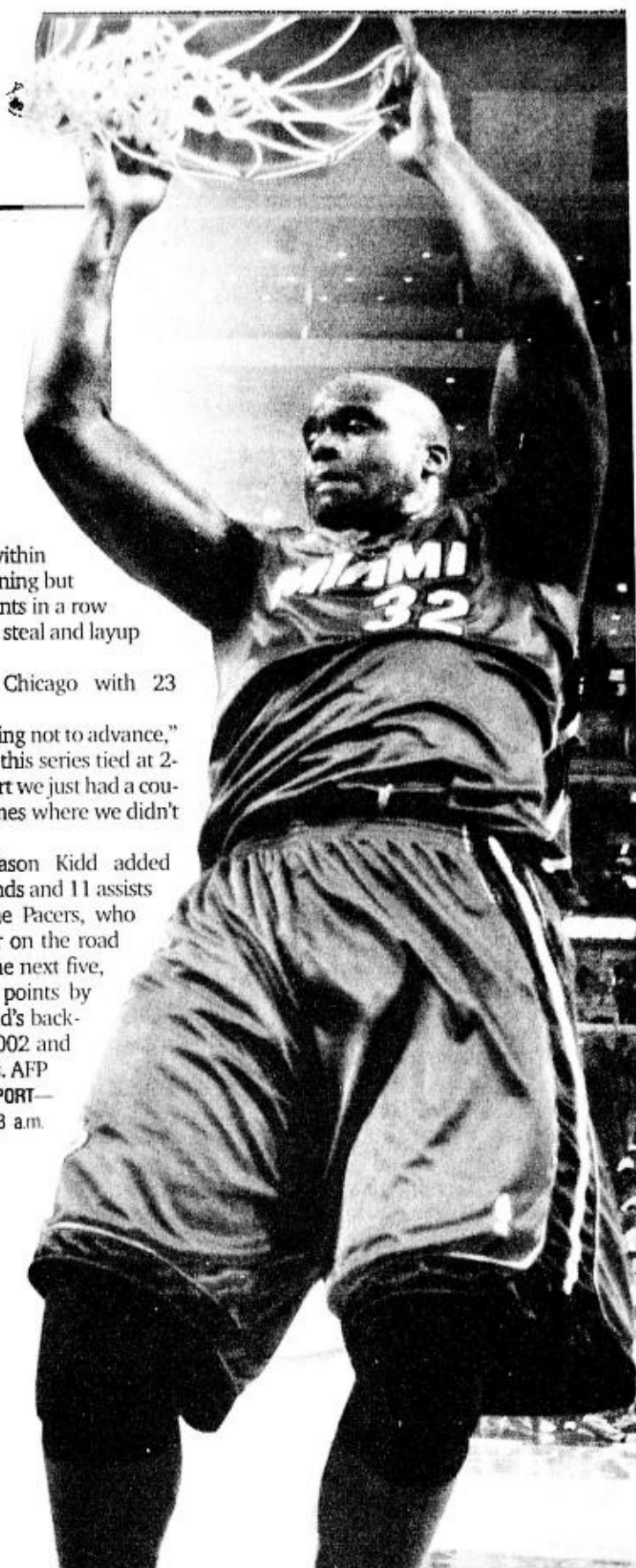
The Bulls pulled within 97-88 with 4:57 remaining but Haslem scored five points in a row and James Posey had a steal and layup to help seal victory.

Kirk Hinrich led Chicago with 23 points.

"It's very disappointing not to advance," Hinrich said. "We had this series tied at 2-2, then for the most part we just had a couple of really rough games where we didn't play like ourselves."

In Indianapolis, Jason Kidd added eight points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists for the Nets while the Pacers, who won the series opener on the road but dropped four of the next five, got a career-high 40 points by Anthony Johnson, Kidd's back-up on New Jersey's 2002 and 2003 runner-up teams. **AFP**

● **NBA on SOLAR SPORT**—Cleveland vs Washington (8 a.m. live, 6:30 p.m. replay)



MIAMI Heat's Shaquille O'Neal highlights his huge playoff performance with a slam dunk. The Heat advanced to the second round of the NBA playoffs after showing the Chicago Bulls the door. **AP**

Suns burn Lakers, force deciding seventh game

LOS ANGELES—STEVE NASH SCORED 32 points and Tim Thomas hit a 3-pointer to force over-time, lifting Phoenix over the Los Angeles Lakers 126-118 Thursday to level their National Basketball Association playoff series.

Seconds from elimination, the Suns rallied to ruin a 50-point performance from Kobe Bryant to force a decider Saturday at Phoenix. The Suns can become only the eighth NBA team to win a best-of-seven series after trailing 3-1.

"We hung in there. We've gone through a lot of adversity," Nash said. "We hung in and kept playing. We just stuck with what got us here."

Thomas, coming off back-to-back 3-point misses, evened the game at 105-105 with a shot

from beyond the arc with 6.3 seconds to play in the fourth quarter, following up a Nash miss with the only Sun basket of the last three minutes.

"I rushed my 3," Nash said. "Timmy sidestepped his man and made a big shot."

"I thought to myself, 'If I get my hands on it, I've got to let it go,'" said Thomas. "I was still confident. It was a big shot."

The Suns, who forced 20 Lakers turnovers, shot 7-of-8 from the field to open the extra session and seized a 120-111 lead with 59 seconds remaining on a Thomas 3-pointer and a Boris Diaw alley-oop pass for a Shawn Marion dunk.

Bryant added two late 3-pointers, reaching a career playoff high and his seventh 50-point effort of the season, but it was not enough to catch the Suns.

Phoenix guard Raja Bell was serving a one-

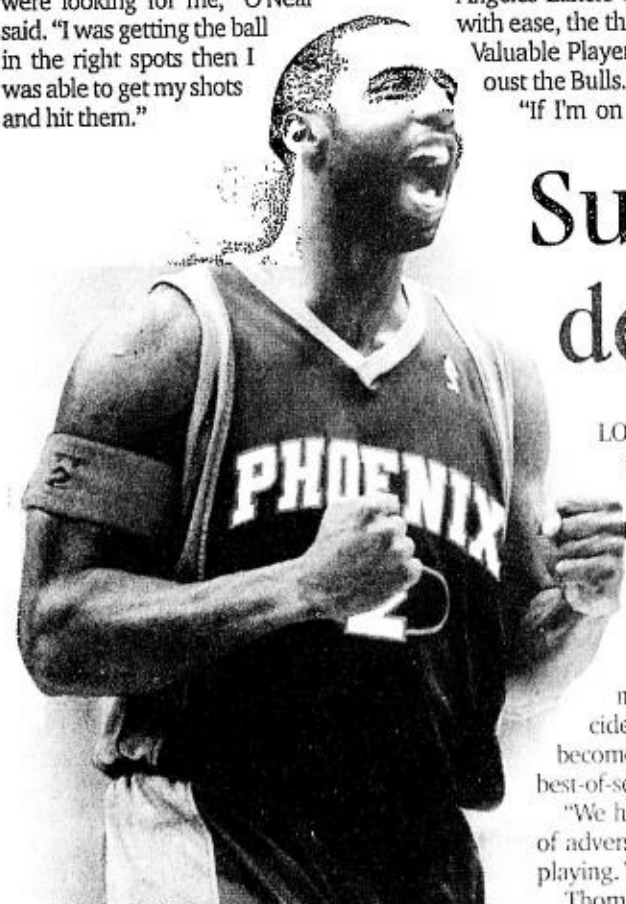
game suspension for wrapping his arm around Bryant's neck in a takedown move that got him ejected from game five. He will be back to defend Bryant in the deciding game.

"We were able to make up for the loss of Raja Bell," said Suns coach Mike D'Antoni.

"We did this for Raja," Nash said.

The Lakers-Suns winner will face the Los Angeles Clippers in the second round.

"We had it all done but crossing the T," Lakers coach Phil Jackson said. **AFP**



THOMAS: Big-time triple. **AFP**

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FIRST SINCE '45

Wie makes men's cut

INCHEON, SOUTH KOREA—American 16-year-old Michelle Wie became the first woman to make the cut in a major men's tour event since 1945 when she fired a three-under 69 on Friday in the second round of the Asian Tour's SK Telecom Open.

The Hawaiian schoolgirl had been bidding to make her first halfway cut in eight appearances against the men. The last woman to make the final two rounds of a senior men's event was Babe Zaharias at the 1945 Los Angeles Open.

Filipino Angelo Que also made the cut with rounds of 71-69. Juvic Pagunsan, however, failed to advance following a 76 and a 70.

Wie carded four birdies and one bogey in the second round, giving her a two-round-



WIE: 5 under. **REUTERS**

tal of five under, five shots behind the clubhouse leaders.

"I still can't believe that I made the cut," Wie told reporters. "I will be even happier tonight when it all sinks in."

Wie, who was particularly happy with her putting, said she was aiming for a solid finish in the tournament and that she was looking forward to playing against the men in the US.

Wie is five strokes behind clubhouse leaders Jeev Milkha Singh of India and South Korea's Lee Seung-ho, who are both at 10-un-

der.

Wie, who regularly hits her drives over 300 yards, missed the cut by one stroke at the Casino World Open in Japan last November after bogeying the last two holes. **Reuters**

Mayol underdog. . .

From page A23

official weigh-in to dispel allegations that he had to drastically cut down on food in order to make the 105 lbs limit.

Mayol also registered a better pulse rate, 46 per minute, against 77 for the 27-year-old champion. But the dusky, marble-eyed punching marvel from Mandaue City is expected to have his hands full against Kyowa (15-1, 6 KOs) who suffered his lone defeat after dislocating a shoulder in a title bout.

Kyowa, who bared a thicker chest and balanced all-around build, was described by Mayol, who had watched the champion from ringside twice, as a very active power-puncher.

When Japanese reporters wondered if he was not intimidated by the champion's solid build, Mayol quipped through interpreter Kunio Takano, a UP graduate, that he was not vying for a body-building championship.

"I'm in the best form of my career," said Mayol, who added that he had sparred over a hundred rounds, both in Manila and here, to achieve championship peak.

Tale of the Tape			
Mayol		Kyowa	
24	AGE	27	
104.5 lbs	WEIGHT	105 lbs	
166 cms	REACH	160 cms	
5'4"	HEIGHT	5'3.5"	
20.3 cms	FIST	19.5 cms	
86 cms	CHEST	88 cms	

and will be beamed via satellite through Solar Sports and IBC-13.

Defending OPBF bantamweight champion Malcolm Tuñacao fights challenger Yasuo Kijima of Japan in the main undercard.

Kyowa did acknowledge that Mayol, a right-hander, has a strong left hand.

"I know my opponent is strong and good but I'm ready to do my best," said Kyowa, who is making a mandatory defense, through an interpreter.

Manny Pacquiao, provided a plane ticket and accommodation at the famed Tokyo Dome Hotel by Yasuo Matsuoka, Mayol's manager, was being awaited here last night although unconfirmed reports said the RP boxing superstar missed his flight from GenSan to Manila.

Superman's seminal story told anew

By Nestor U. Torre

THE FANTASY CRAZE IN SHOW BUSINESS IS EVIDENT NOT JUST locally, but on international screens as well. A host of movie superheroes is about to zap and zoom into movie theaters all over the world, led by one of the most iconic superheroes of them all, Superman.

The latest wave of movies about Clark Kent and his super-alter ego began in 1978, with Christopher Reeve playing the quintessential Man of Steel. Next came "Superman 2" in 1980, "Superman 3" in 1983 and "Superman 4" in 1987, all with Reeve topbilling before his ironic accident cruelly felled him and transformed him into a real-life hero in his own right.

This year, the Man of Steel's seminal story is told anew, in "Superman Returns," with a fresh, new hunk, Brandon Routh, clinching the prized title role—but only after a very long search.

Plum role

Other actors considered for the plum role include Brendan Fraser, Ashton Kutcher, Josh Hartnett, Paul Walker, James Caviezel, Jerry O'Connell and David Boreanaz!

What does the new "Superman" film offer that past productions haven't? It's definitely a movie for today's viewers, edgier and more mordant than usual, without giving up the popular film franchise's ability to thrill and inspire.

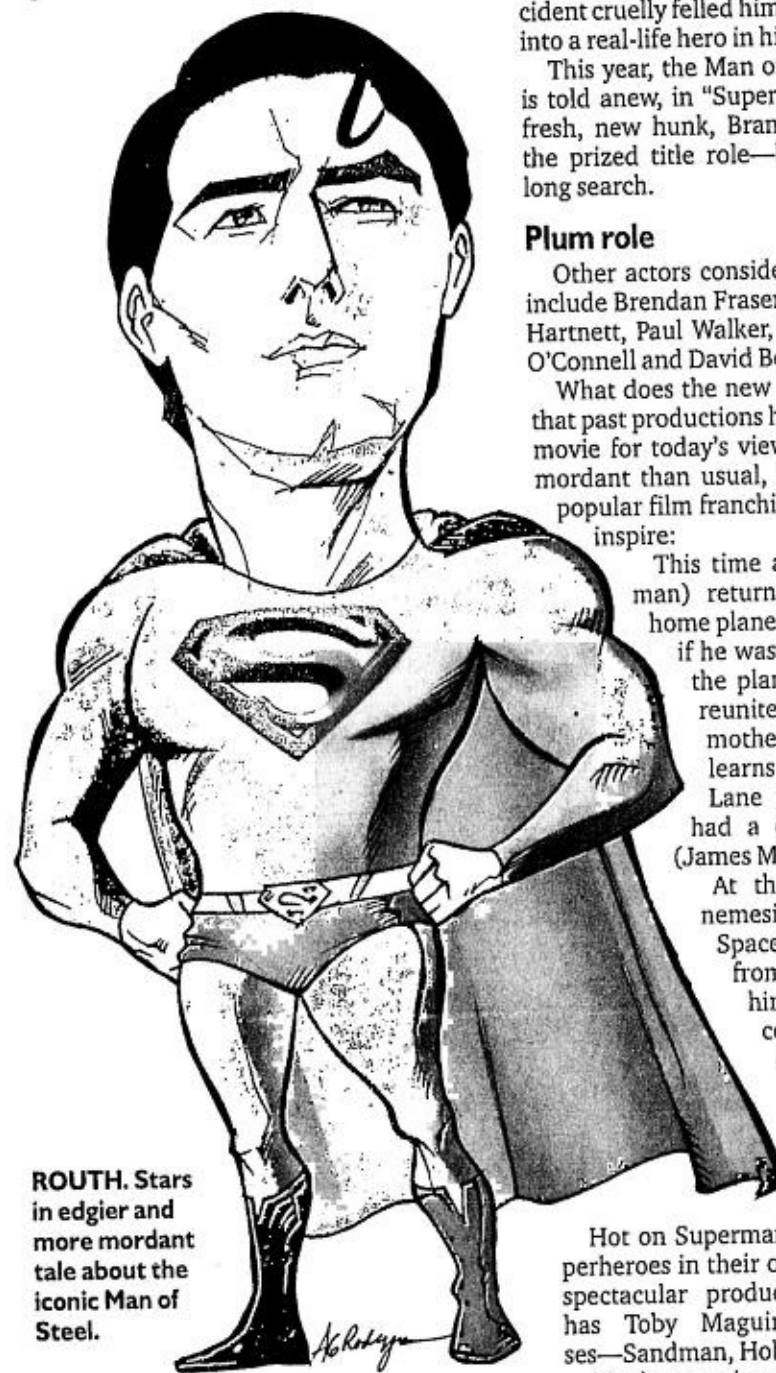
This time around, Kal-El (Superman) returns from a visit to his home planet of Krypton, to find out if he was the only survivor after the planet's destruction. He is reunited with his adoptive mother (Eva Marie Saint) and learns that his beloved Lois Lane (Kate Bosworth) has had a child by another man (James Marsden).

At the same time, his old nemesis, Lex Luthor (Kevin Spacey), has been released from jail and vows to crush him once and for all. Of course, Superman refuses to cooperate, and instead rescues the world from total destruction.

New nemeses

Hot on Superman's heels come other superheroes in their own appropriately mega-spectacular productions: "Spider-Man 3" has Toby Maguire facing new nemeses—Sandman, Hobgoblin and Venom.

Much more imminent is the showing of



ROUTH. Stars in edgier and more mordant tale about the iconic Man of Steel.

CARICATURE BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

SUPERMAN'S/A2-2

NOW SHOWING

Fish out of water

By Rito P. Asilo

"Aquamarine"

D: Elizabeth Allen

S: Emma Roberts, Joanna "JoJo" Levesque, Sara Paxton

LOVE IS A MYTH. OR SO THE FATHER OF MERMAID, AQUAMARINE (Sara Paxton), insists. After a violent storm, when the naive half-human, half-fish beauty is washed ashore in Florida—and into the lives of 15-year-old eighth graders Claire (Emma Roberts) and Hailey (JoJo)—the mermaid's life takes a serendipitous turn.

Claire and Hailey are spending the final days of summer daydreaming about hunky lifeguard, Raymond (Jake McDorman), and dreading the transfer of Hailey's family to Australia.

But, the toothsome twosome sees a flicker of light at the end of the tunnel when Aqua seeks their help to accomplish her "mission impossible": To prove that love exists—in three days!

Wishes

The tweeners' assistance comes at a price, however. You see, in the world according to Aquamarine, wishes are granted to those who help scaly damsels in distress. For Aqua, however, the stakes are higher: Her hand has been promised to a spoiled, rich merman she doesn't love. If she gets Raymond to fall in love with her, she'll be released from a fate worse than eating spoiled sushi. But, time is running out...

Elizabeth Allen's light and breezy film, based on Alice Hoffman's novel, is predictable, but it doesn't pretend to be more than the featherweight fluff it is. Happily, its young protagonists, Roberts and Levesque, exude a sprightly charm and youthful exuberance that lend plausibility to cinematic pulp!

LEVESQUE AND ROBERTS. Exude sprightly charm and youthful exuberance.



"Gusto ko ng
mutant powers
sa phone ko!"



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MARVEL

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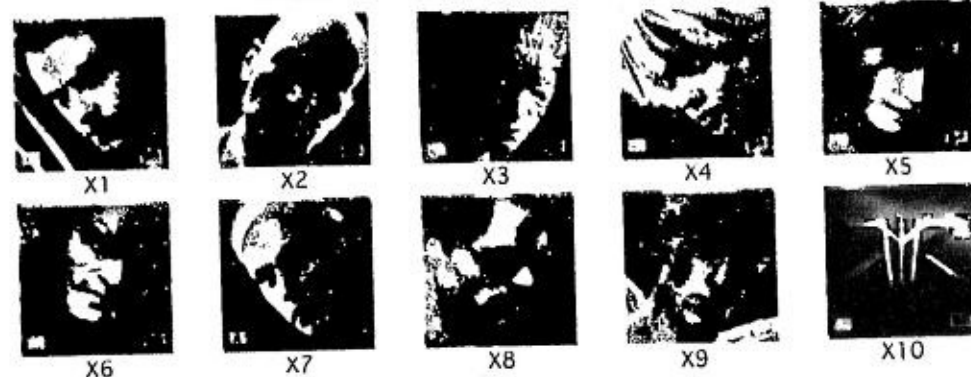
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Shang-Li Plaza

By Edmund L. Sicam

AS VICE PRESIDENT for programming of Sky Cable, Juno Henares has her hands full negotiating with content providers, coordinating with sister companies and handling Sky's PR requirements. Juno's first love, however, is acting, so despite her busy schedule, she has agreed to appear in Rep's "Two and Two Make Sex" at Onstage in Makati.



HENARES. Has reconnected with her theater buddies.

Affair

Juno plays Ruth, writer of a "Dear Abby" type column. Her advice is sought by almost 50 Clare, who fears her husband, George, is having an affair with twentysomething Jane, who in turn is involved with Nick.

With her demanding job and as the wife of Tonichi Chuidian and mother of their children, Juno realized that she could not be as involved with show business as she was in the '80s.

But she reconnected with her theater buddies and decided to join the Trumpets production of "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe." It would take several years before she could do another play, this time a Repertory children's theater production, "The Emperor's New Clothes," which ran in December 2005.

Negotiations

Juno says her theater background has helped her a lot in her present job, especially when it involves negotiations. Acting has given her the confidence to deal with different personalities and cultures.

Juno is enjoying her corporate job but admits she misses the stage. That's why, when her schedule permits, she accepts acting assignments like "Two and Two Make Sex."

Her only frustration as a performer is acting for the movies, where actors get a record of their body of work. "You can see how you have grown, something that is not available in theater," she sighs. (Call 8870710 or 891999.)

Superman's seminal story told anew

From page A2-1

"X-Men: The Last Stand," the third installment in the popular film series about a platoon of do-gooder "super-freaks."

"The Last Stand" reunites all of the series' key cast members, who will say goodbye to the profitable film franchise with this final installment.

"Wolverine" is a spin-off from the hit "X-Men" franchise, with Hugh Jackman playing the title character.

Plus: "My Super Ex-Girlfriend," a comedy that turns the superhero ethos on its ear, with Uma Thurman using her extraordinary powers to avenge herself on the lout who broke her heart.

And, in "Zoom," Tim Allen is cast as a retired superhero who looks for kids to train as tomorrow's super-avengers!

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Takashi Shimizu ...

From page A2-4

information on the secrets and events that inspired "The Da Vinci Code" in a one-hour special, "Da Vinci Declassified," at 9 p.m. on May 8, encoring at 10 p.m. on May 14.

Movies on TV

On HBO, May 6 at 7:30 p.m., "New Jack City." May 7 at 6:30

a.m., "Any Which Way You Can." May 8 at 10:55 p.m., "New York Minute." May 9 at 6 a.m., "Men Don't Leave."

On Cinemax, May 6 at 2:25 p.m., "Ordinary Decent Criminals." May 7 at 10:30 p.m., "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind." May 8 at 8 p.m., "Pleasantville." May 9 at 2:35 p.m., "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town."



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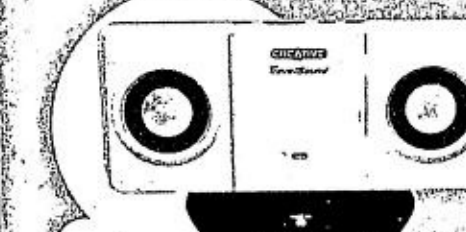
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G4	GLORIETTA 4	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	2 AQUAMARINE	3 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	4 SENTINEL
GB1	GREENBELT 1	1 SENTINEL	2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	3 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	4 THE WILD
GB3	GREENBELT 3	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	3 SILENT HILL	4 AQUAMARINE
ATC	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	3 SILENT HILL	4 AQUAMARINE
ACC	AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	3 NORTH COUNTRY	4 THE DARK
M2	MARKET! MARKET!	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	2 AQUAMARINE	3 SILENT HILL	4 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3

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Takashi Shimizu unveils latest shocker

AFTER HIT ASIAN HORROR MOVIES LIKE "The Ring" and "The Grudge" comes director Takashi Shimizu's latest shocker, "Reincarnation."

It starts with a report that tells viewers that a

director is making a film about a 1970 murder spree in a Tokyo hotel. The perpetrator, a professor, went mad and killed his wife, nine hotel guests, and his daughter—all the while recording his acts of brutality on a camcorder.

MONTAGE

Actress Nagisa Sugiura auditions for and clinches the daughter's role. But, she is terrified when she has a vision and experiences the 1970 murders as if they're happening around her.

She also finds the camcorder, has its footage processed, and discovers the mystery behind the massacre. She ends up fearing that she, too, will suffer the same fate. "Reincarnation (Rinne)," opens May 10.

On Nickelodeon

On May 14, Nickelodeon presents a two-hour special spotlighting Mother's Day-themed episodes of Nick favorites like "Danny Phantom," "The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron," "The Fairly Odd Parents" and "SpongeBob Squarepants."

Watch out also for new episodes of "Avatar: The Legend of Aang," at 5:30 p.m. on May 19. "Unfabulous" at 7:30 p.m. on May 21 invites you to join 13-year-old Addie Singer as she tackles relationship issues like jealousy, keeping her friends together, and breaking up. For more exciting highlights, log on to www.nicksplat.com.

'Poseidon' premiere

The invitational gala premiere of "Poseidon" is on May 7 at the Shangri-La complex. Directed by Wolfgang Petersen, the film stars Josh Lucas, Kurt Russell, Richard Dreyfuss, Emmy Rossum, Jacinda Barrett and Mike Vogel.



"REINCARNATION." Horror caught on camcorder.

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2	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 11:30, 2:15, 5:00, 8:00, 10:45 PG-13
3	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00 PG-13
4	AQUAMARINE 1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00 G

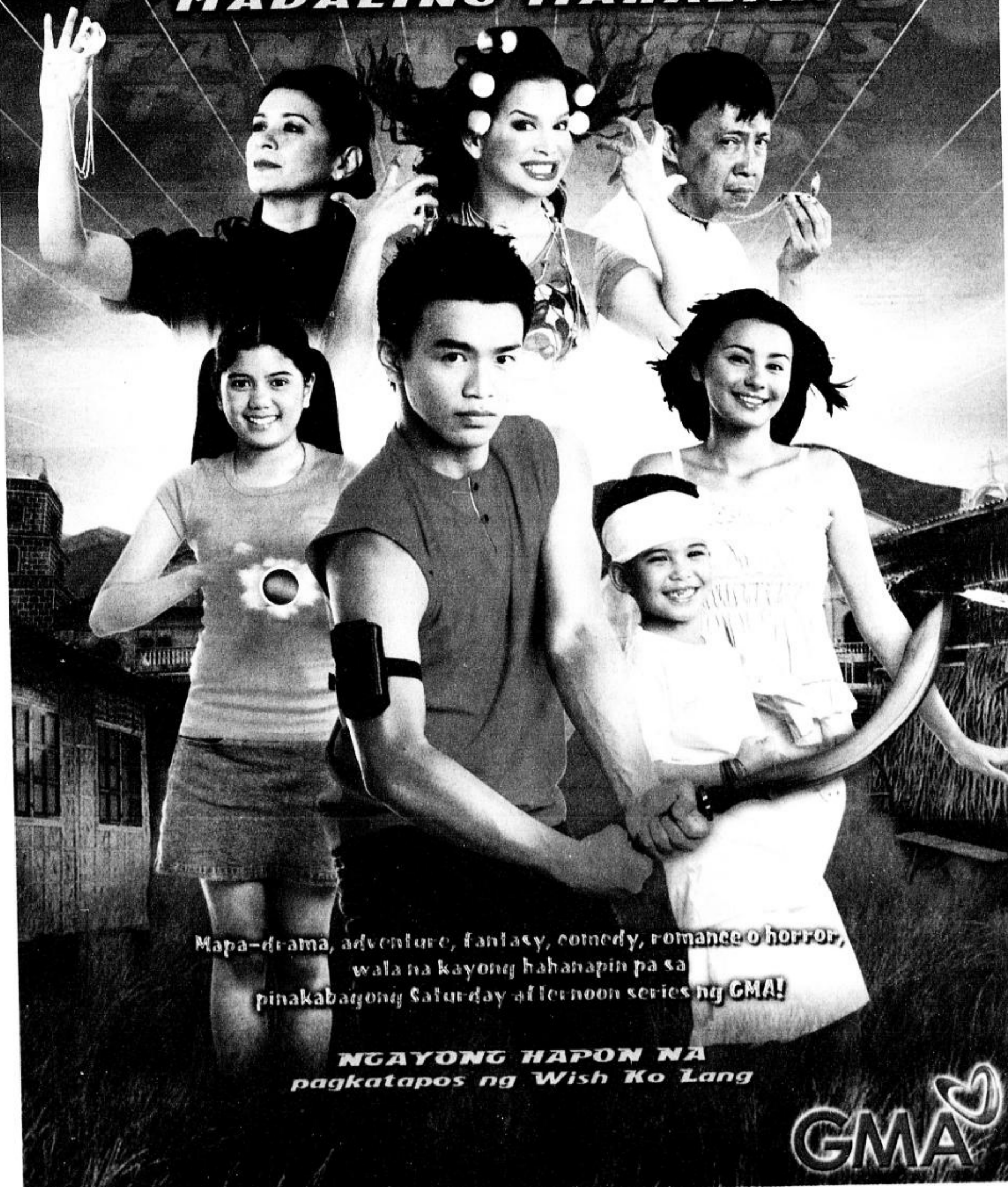
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pagkatapos ng Wish Ko Lang



10 Most Popular Asian Artists

At 1 p.m. today, Channel [V] features the 10 Most Popular Asian Artists. On May 13, the focus is on Jericho Rosales, Sheila Majid, Siti Nurhaliza and Utada Kiraku. On May 20, Modern Dog, PRU, Ahli Fiqir and Lo. On May 27, Wang Lee Hom and Jay Chou.

'Da Vinci Declassified'

The Discovery Channel reveals new
TAKASHI/A2-3

Been there, seen that

By Noelani Torre

IF YOU'RE UNDER SIX YEARS OLD, you'll probably enjoy Disney's CGI animated feature "The Wild." If you're the poor grown-up who's taking the kids to see a movie, however, you'll probably enjoy the fact that this one runs for a thankfully brief one hour and 25 minutes. It's long enough to make you feel soporific, but not comatose.

It's not that the movie doesn't generate any excitement—visually at least it's quite impressive, and there's enough action in the story to keep sugar-crazed youngsters satisfied. Unfortunately, that same story also happens to sound like "Madagascar" (DreamWorks).

Natives

The stars in "The Wild" are again New York zoo animals who venture out into the real, non-urban jungle in pursuit of one of their co-inmates. They're similarly involved in a sea journey, and land on a lush, verdant place where the natives are a little strange. Of course, the film's four scriptwriters didn't second-guess everything from "Madagascar." They also put in a bit of "Finding Nemo" and "The Lion King."

Here's how it goes: Samson (Kiefer Sutherland) is one of the stars in the zoo. His cub Ryan (Greg Cipes) gets locked inside a box destined to be shipped to Africa and Samson—with the help of friends Benny the squirrel (Jim Belushi), Bridget the giraffe (Janeane Garofalo), Larry the anaconda (Richard Kind) and Nigel the koala (Eddie Izzard)—goes after him.

Wildebust

When they get to Africa, they find out that they have to contend with a lot of wildebeest led by a demented Kazar (William Shatner). They are determined to stop being at the bottom of the food chain and get to the top instead—a shift to predator transformation that involves their killing the top predators, lions. Also, there's a volcano nearby that's going to erupt.

Samson and Ryan do the father-son thing ala "Lion King" and "Finding Nemo." Ryan has a roaring problem and he feels that he will never live up to his father's reputation as a champion roarer. Samson, who's forever regaling his son with his exploits in the wild, has a few secrets of his own.

The father-son thing may be a cliché, but it can still be heartwarming. Unfortunately, here it ends up being trite and schmaltzy. It's the whole mechanized Disney process that sees no problem in doing the same thing over and over again as long as it's profitable.

Odd couple

As for the humor, there isn't much of it. The squirrel is in love with the giraffe, but that odd-couple relationship is funny only in the beginning. The anaconda is sort of spaced out, but he doesn't have any amusing spaced-out lines. The koala, who strangely enough has a British accent courtesy of Izzard, is sometimes droll, but not enough to compensate for everybody else's dryness.

If there's anything here worth noting, it would be the photorealism they put into the animation. Samson's fur, we are told, has more than six million separate hair follicles. Too bad it takes more than realistic hair to make a good movie.

SATURDAY Special

Angelina Jolie and George Clooney pay it forward



JOLIE.
Empowering
Namibian
youth
through
education.

CARICATURE BY STEPH BRAVO

By Nestor U. Torre

THESE DAYS, ANGELINA JOLIE IS VERY much in the news because she's about to give birth to her love child with Brad Pitt. Yes, the big screen's hit couple, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, have upstaged Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes as the show biz world's most visible and exciting tandem. "TomKat" are now proud parents, while "Brangelina" are still to give birth, so all eyes are on them.

Concerned individual

For her part, however, Angelina can't be bothered with such superficial and shrill "natal news" exploitation. At the height of her pregnancy two weeks ago, she flew to Namibia, not in her show biz capacity, but as a concerned individual who used her celebrity status to shed light and to focus the world's attention on the tragedy taking place in that

benighted African nation.

Jolie knows she can't solve all of the country's problems, so she's focusing on empowering its youth through education. A lot of Namibia's social ills happen because the population is too poor to afford the education it needs to know its rights and powers.

In a TV interview, Angelina somberly observes, "It's the worst thing in the world for a father and mother not to be able to educate and properly rear their children. In fact, education can even save lives. As many as 700,000 people could be saved from dying from AIDS if they were better educated on how to prevent it."

Goal

That's why the star has set as her goal to make education at least until the fifth grade available to every Namibian child by 2015. She urges viewers in other countries to donate what they can, pointing out that it

takes only a few dollars to educate a child in Africa.

She raps Americans for not doing enough for Namibia, revealing that Great Britain donates 300 percent of what the US does.

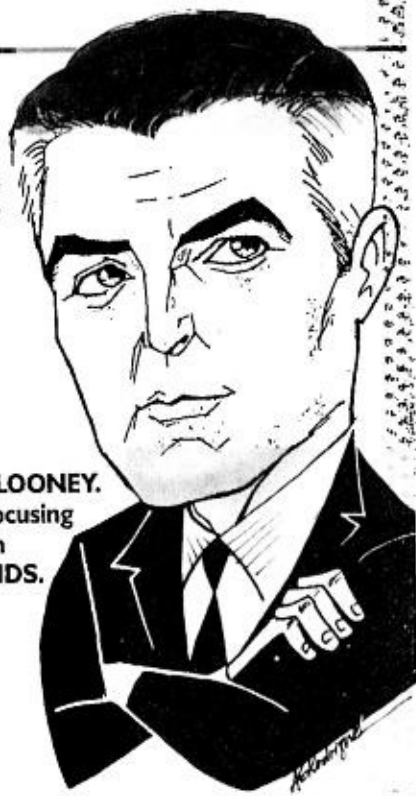
Why should Americans concern themselves with the troubles of a country so far away from them? Angelina ripostes, "Don't just fix your home—if the neighborhood around us falls apart, we're all done for."

Inspiring

It's refreshing and inspiring to see Angelina focusing her energies, not on her personal concerns, but on using her celebrity to help others. The whole world is going ga-ga over the fact that she's bearing hunky Brad's child, but she frankly couldn't care less about all the fuss and bother.

May other celebrities be as productive in the use of their own star power to make

CLOONEY.
Focusing
on
AIDS.



CARICATURE BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

the world a better, kinder place to live in.

Another celebrity who did exactly that recently is George Clooney. His own mission took him to the Sudan, which has its own festering cruelties and social ills, and he's chosen to throw the spotlight on that country's huge AIDS problem.

May Angelina and George's tribe increase! Pinoy stars, what are you doing to improve other people's lives and future prospects?

Marvin, Jennifer pursue their other passions

By Jocelyn Valle

DO YOU KNOW what stars do when they're neither in front of the camera nor at home taking a break? They pursue their other interests.

Marvin Agustin takes over the sushi bar at Sumo Sam, the five-month-old restaurant at Shangri-La Mall that he co-owns. Yes, he can make delicious California maki and spicy tuna roll—with a passion!

"Iba kapag hilig mo talaga, iba ang bagsak ng ingredients," he beams, adding that he learned to cook from his mother. He's also taken up a cooking course at the International School for Culinary Arts and Hotel Management.

Favorite food

"It's my all-time favorite food," says one of the leads of "I Love New York" about Japanese cuisine.

"Napakasap, healthy at saka hindi messy kainin. And the art and discipline in preparing and cooking it, awesome!"

Has Marvin found the right balance between being an actor and a restaurateur?

"Naku, nalilito na ako!" he shakes his head. "Noong premiere night ng 'Kutob' last year, 6:30 ang call time namin pero 7 p.m. na, gumagawa pa ako ng sushi. 'Pagtingin ko sa cell phone ko, si Direk Joey Rcyes nagti-text. Sabi ko, 'Punta na ako d'yan, Direk, maghuhugas lang ako ng kamay.'"

Wig styling

Jennifer Sevilla, on the other hand, is able to incorporate her newfound passion for wig styling into her acting profession. "Eto si Yvonne," she grins, showing the hairpiece that she used to wear on the recently concluded season of "Now and Forever."

"At first, sini-set ang hair ko kasi 'pag kontrabida, ang gusto nila kulot," she explains. "Every taping na lang, they'd style my hair. Nakakasira ng buhok! 'Pag mainit, madaling matanggal ang kulot and at the same time, hassle sa set kasi hintayin ka pa. 'Pag wig, ready na."

Jennifer happily reports that most of the wigs that other actors wear on various TV shows come from Mannequin Incorporated, which sells hairpieces and visual merchandising items in Tutuban. She takes care of the creative and marketing aspects of the company that her boyfriend Seymour Go put up in 2004.

Though she enjoys channeling her flair for fashion into her wigs, Jennifer still hopes to go back to designing clothes. Between 2000 and 2004, she designed gowns for friends while accepting orders for company uniforms and scrubs for physical therapy students.

"Running my own boutique remains one of my goals. But my heart is really in acting," intones one of the industry's most gifted but underrated stars.



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2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 11:20 2:00 4:40 7:20 10:00	7 THE WILD 1:30 3:35 5:40 7:45 9:50
3 THE SENTINEL 12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00	8 SLITHER 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
4 PAMAHIN 12:40 3:00 5:20	9 SILENT HILL 11:40 2:15 4:50 7:25 10:00
5 AQUAMARINE 12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50	10 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS 1:30 3:35 5:40 7:45 9:50

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1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00	5 THE SENTINEL 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
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3 THE WILD 12:00 1:30 3:00	7 SILENT HILL 11:00 1:50 4:30 7:10 9:50
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SATURDAYSpecial

SATURDAY,
MAY 6, 2006

Richard Merk revives Pinoy classics

By Remy M. Umerez

"ALAALA," THE NEWLY RELEASED CD BY RICHARD

Merk, is a collection of well-loved Filipino ditties and kundimans. What prompted Richard to produce it?



MERK. Tribute to our musical heritage.

"When I watch old LVN movies on Cinema One, they never fail to include scenes where male stars sing love songs to their leading ladies. The finales of these films feature festive songs and folk dances. The album is my tribute to our musical heritage. With that concept in mind, I decided to tweak it a bit by jazzing up their interpretations," Richard explains.

Album

Launched recently at Merks Bistro & Bar, the album features "Hindi Kita Malimot," "Ang Tangi Kong Pag-ibig," "Maala-ala Mo Kaya," "Sapagka't Kami'y Tao Lamang," "Ikaw," "Mahiwaga" and "Kailangan Kita."

The songs' composers read like a who's who of the music industry: Josefino Cenizal, George Canseco, Ernani Cuenco, Levi Celerio, Tony Maiquez, Constancio de Guzman, Restie Umali and Leopoldo Silos.

The title track ("Alaala") was composed by Noel Cabangon, who wrote it as a reminder of the Leyte tragedy.

"Alaala" is Richard's first OPM album and, though he gives the songs a jazzy beat, he treats them with respect.

Proceeds of the album will benefit victims of the St. Bernard tragedy through the Panagho Children's Foundation.



Mr. & Ms. honors moms

ALBERT AND LIEZL Martinez topbill the May Issue of Mr. & Ms. They talk about life, love, and yes, Amalia Fuentes.

Mr. & Ms. continues celebrating its 30th anniversary by honoring those very special women in our lives—our moms.

Learn tips on how to cope with problematic child-rearing situations using the mind. Find out what celebrity moms have to say about their kids.

Gift ideas

Mr. & Ms. also offers gift ideas for mothers. There is an article on Angels and Ghosts and how one person sees the image of her dead mother.

Mr. & Ms. sustains its paranormal slant with features from Jaime T. Licauco, who informs readers on the difference between demonic possession and insanity. On the other hand, writer Nita Umali-Berthelsen shares her thoughts on the Omens of Death. Other features include psychic Frances Gloria's "Sexual Violence in Past Lives" and Mariel Francisco's thoughts on what is good and bad according to Don Miguel Ruiz's "The Four Agreements."

Movies

Read about the third installment of "X-Men," plus other movies showing this month.

Other important features: a heart doctor talks about mending broken hearts, on the earth's dwindling water supply, how stopping smoking can improve the skin, and the unity Filipinos crave for.



ALBERT and Liezl Martinez.

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4 THE WILD 12:00 / 2:00 / 4:00 / 6:00 / 8:00	SLITHER 12:15 / 2:20 / 4:25 / 6:30 / 8:35	

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STREET SMART



Mandy Navasero

No fear of death

THE PERSON OR SOUL is eternal and undying. Being eternal, there is no reason for the person to suffer even if the body dies. And yet, death is a fearful thing for many people.

Although people may have heard that the soul is eternal, they have a great fear of death because it doesn't just mean leaving but also entering somewhere else—and they are not in control of what they will face next.

They also know that they face the consequences of their past actions. The price to pay depends on what they have done.

Suffering

The Supreme Father does not enjoy the suffering of His children; it makes Him very sad. Out of His compassion, He offers an opportunity to those who have not surrendered to Him: If one takes shelter in the Father in the form of His Holy Names, the living entity begins to be purified of the sinful contamination from his previous activities.

As the Holy Names wash the heart clean, natural love for God begins to manifest itself. Enveloped by love for the Supreme, we have no fear of death because we have His full protection.

We have a choice in life. We can live as materialistic false lords and face the consequences, or take shelter in the Supreme and live as His eternal loving servants.

Opposites

People sometimes rationalize, "If there is no evil, we won't appreciate good." This is the yin-yang philosophy. It is true that in the material world, you have opposites or dualities. But we must transcend duality.

For the spiritualist, day and night are both good because he serves God. The Supreme Lord is wonderful and brings happiness and protection to His servants in all circumstances.

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	May 14	Alaminos, Pangasinan
	May 14	Bauang, La Union
South Luzon	May 14	Cuenca, Batangas
	May 16	San Juan, Batangas
Visayas	May 27	Mandaue, Cebu
	June 10	Talisay, Bacolod
Mindanao	May 13	Kauswagan, CDO
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BUSINESS

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Inflation slowed down to 7.1% in April

Increase in consumer prices eases due to high farm yields

By Michelle V. Remo

CONSUMER PRICES grew 7.1 percent year-on-year in April, registering a slowdown from the 7.6 percent recorded a month ago, as lower price increments were recorded across all commodity groups, including food products.

The latest inflation rate was also more than a percentage point lower than the 8.5 percent recorded in April last year, according to the National Statistics Office.

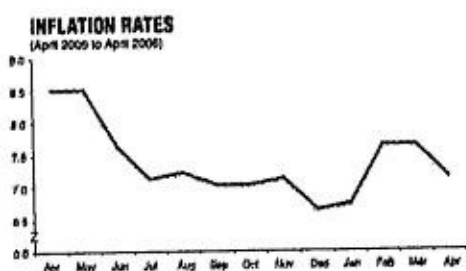
The NSO reported that inflation for food products slowed down to 6.1 percent from 6.5 percent the previous month. The entire food, beverage and tobacco (FBT) group recorded a decelerated inflation of 6.1 percent from the 6.4 percent in March.

Food products that posted slower inflation rates included

rice (from 7.1 to 5.6 percent), fish (4.6 to 4.5 percent), meat (2.8 to 2.4 percent), eggs (6 to 5.9 percent), and dairy products (6.3 to 6 percent).

Prices of fruits and vegetables registered an increase of 9.3 percent, the same as the previous month's, while the cost of corn rose from 3 to 3.5 percent.

Victor Abola, economics professor from the University of Asia and the Pacific, said in an interview with the INQUIRER that the deceleration of inflation had to do with the improved harvests in the farm sector that helped

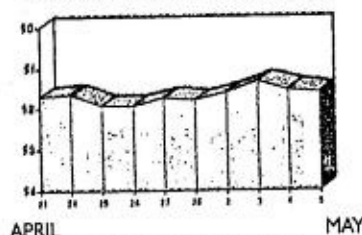


propped up supply early this year.

The agriculture sector grew 4.8 percent in the first quarter, reversing the 0.1-percent contraction recorded during the same period last year, and better than the government's 4-percent fore-

INFLATION/B2

INDICATORS CURRENCIES



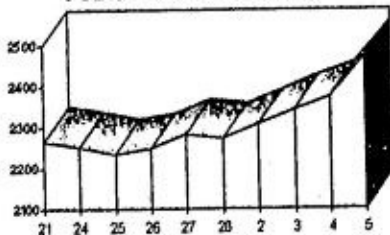
P 51.61 = \$
As of 5 p.m., May 5, 2006

Y 113.82 = \$
As of 5 p.m., May 2, 2006

GOLD: \$662.70-663.20
per ounce Hong Kong, May 4, 2006

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



Shares end 4.22% up

SHARE PRICES YESTERDAY rose very sharply, adding 4.22 percent for the biggest single-day gain in five years on the back of continued strong foreign investor support, dealers said.

It was the fourth session in a row that the market has risen and the main index now stands at its best level since July 1999.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index jumped 99.95 points to 2,470.24, the day's high and the best finish since 2,488.62 on July 22, 1999.

Volume was 3.04 billion shares worth P4.38 billion (\$85.2 million). The broader all-shares index ended up 44.97 points at 1,516.72. Gainers led declines 59 to 42, with 50 stocks unchanged.

AFP

SSS gets GMA's support in EPCIB dispute

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo is supporting the position of the Social Security System to hold off the sale of its shares in Equitable-PCIBank, as proposed by the Government Service and Insurance System, until the Supreme Court has cleared up all legal questions on the disposition of the pension fund's shares.

"[The President] has said nothing about our transactions because she understands our position that we can't sell our shares until the Supreme Court cases have been resolved," SSS president Corazon dela Paz said.

SM-Banco de Oro (SM-BDO), which has a 34-percent stake in EPCIB, offered to buy the 29 percent share of SSS in EPCIB in December 2003 to firm up its control of the country's number three lender.

SSS/B2

WHAT'S INSIDE

Demand from call centers, IT firms jacks up office space rates /B3

Subic firms seen getting VAT exemption /B10

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Business

Current account surplus seen growing by 19%

By Michelle V. Remo

THE PHILIPPINES' CURRENT ACCOUNT surplus, buoyed by the continued increase in remittances from overseas Filipino workers, is seen to grow by 19 percent to \$2.8 billion by the end of the year.

The Institute of International Finance Inc. (IIF), an organization of financial institutions in industrialized countries, said the projected increase in the country's current account surplus would help the government lessen its dependence on foreign borrowings. This would complement the government's goal of improving its fiscal condition, IIF added.

The Department of Finance said the government had been wanting to trim down its foreign borrowings to lessen exposure to foreign exchange risks that could potentially blot its already huge debts.

The country's current account, which stood at a surplus of \$2.354 billion as of end-2005, is a measure of the net foreign exchange inflows arising from the trade of goods and services and remittances.

"The current account surplus will continue to bolster the balance of payments (BOP) and facilitate the government's program of gradually reducing its dependence on international bonds for deficit financing," IIF said in its assessment of the Philippine economy.

A government is usually forced to undertake foreign borrowings as a means to plug a budget deficit if it has a weak current account position. This is because the dollar inflows arising from foreign borrowings are used to prop up a country's foreign exchange reserves.

With a strong current account position, the IIF said, the Philippines could afford to pursue its plan of reducing its dependence on foreign borrowings.

The IIF said the Philippines' strong current account position would support the government's plan to retire about \$411 million worth of Brady bonds in June using its existing liquidity.

The IIF said the expected growth in remittances from OFWs would compensate for this year's expected trade deficit (a result of imports being higher than exports).

BSP's dollar purchases, OFW remittances provide the boost

By Doris C. Dumlaog

THE COUNTRY'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE reserves hit a new high of \$20.91 billion in end-April from the end-March level of \$20.84 billion. In a press statement, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas officer in charge Diwa Guinigundo said the gross international reserves (GIR) level was boosted by the central bank's dollar purchases from the spot foreign exchange market and income from investments abroad, as well as national government deposits consisting of proceeds from its project loans.

The GIR—composed of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, special drawing rights from the International Monetary Fund and foreign investments—is an indicator of the country's ability to service its foreign exchange requirements particularly for importation and debt servicing.

"The current GIR level is adequate to cover about 4.4 months of imports of goods and payments of services and income," Guinigundo said. "This level is also equivalent to 3.3 times the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 1.7 times based on residual maturity," he added.

INQUIRER sources said the GIR even hit \$21.06 billion on April 5 due mainly to the BSP's net foreign exchange purchases.

The sources said that in the first week of April alone, the BSP's net dollar purchases amounted to nearly \$200 million as it took advantage of strong foreign exchange inflows mainly from overseas Filipino workers.

In early April, the state-owned Philippine National Oil Co. deposited in the BSP \$14 mil-



GUINIGUNDO

lion. The central bank also also earned about \$4 million from investments abroad. These were partly offset, however, by debt servicing requirements of the national government amounting to \$11 million.

The BSP said that with the improvement in the GIR, its net international reserves rose by \$43 million to \$20.26 billion.

The NIR refers to the difference between the GIR and the combined total of short-term liabilities and use of IMF credits.

The GIR build-up over the past few months has been supported by proceeds from the front-loading of the government's foreign borrowings, remittances from overseas Filipino workers, and foreign direct investment and portfolio inflows.

PHC assets intact, says company exec

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE BOARD OF LISTED FIRM Philcomsat Holdings Corp. (PHC) and the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) belied allegations that, together, they have dissipated P1 billion in cash holding of the listed firm.

PHC is 80-percent owned by satellite technology pioneer Philippine Communications Satellite Corp. (Philcomsat). Both firms are owned by Philippine Overseas Telecommunications Corp. (POTC) whose shares were sequestered by the government in 1986 on allegations that those shares were acquired by ill-gotten wealth.

In a press conference yesterday, PHC director and vice president Philip Brodett said the company's assets were intact.

Based on the company's financial report in 2005, its total assets stood at P1.48 billion, slightly lower than P1.5 billion in 2004. Of the total assets, cash and cash equivalents accounted for P691 million in 2005, down from P746.2 million in 2004.

Brodett also said Philcomsat paid only P394.4 million in cash to PHC, contrary to claims that the bulk of PHC's P1 billion worth of assets were poured in by Philcomsat.

Philcomsat subscribed to P799.6 million worth of PHC shares, of which it paid P405.1 million by assigning nine parcels of land and a condominium unit at the Pacific Star Building to PHC. The balance of P394.4 million was paid in cash.

"The land is still there, the P394 million (cash) is still there. There was no dissipation (of assets)," Brodett said.

Brodett said that PHC has, in fact, grown from a P10-million company when it acquired Liberty Mines Inc. in 1996 to a company with no debt and with P1.5 billion in assets today.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, one of the founding shareholders of Philcomsat, on Thursday slammed the board of PHC, including government nominees, for "dissipating" the assets of the publicly listed company.

Enrile earlier asked the board to explain how a substantial part of the P1 billion that, he said, the company got from Philcomsat was spent.

In 2004, PHC invested P80 million in a 120-seats telemarketing project through a wholly-owned unit, Telecommunications Center Inc. (TCI).

However, with the increases in its expenses overtaking revenue growth, PHC's net loss widened to P21.7 million in 2005 from P6.9 million in 2004.

Lopez holding firm posted P1.14-B profit in '05

BENPRES HOLDINGS CORP SAID IT posted a net profit of P1.14 billion in 2005, a turnaround from a net loss of P1.8 billion in the previous year.

In a report to regulators, the company said that of the net income, P732 million came from the parent firm while P407 million was booked as contribution from minority interests.

Benpres posted a consolidated revenue of P17 billion in 2005, 8.1 percent higher than the restated consolidated

revenue of P15.8 billion in 2004.

The revenues were derived from airtime, sales and services, and license fees of P1.6 billion from ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.

Provisions for the decline in the value of investments soared to P2.319 billion as Benpres recognized an impairment loss of P2 billion on its investments in cable television operation.

General and administrative expenses increased by 71 percent to P5.9 billion,

the bulk of which stemmed from increases in depreciation and amortization, advertising and promotions and other expenses that were mainly ABS-CBN accounts.

Interest and financing charges increased by 20 percent due to higher interest rates on debt.

Equity in net earnings of associates increased by 63 percent due to the robust performances of First Philippine Holdings Corp. and First Philippine In-

frastructure Development Corp., Benpres' vehicle in charge of its investment in Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC).

Interest income rose by 50 percent to P297 million as interest rates improved in 2005. Foreign exchange income amounted to P840 million, from a loss of P269 million, as the peso appreciated against the dollar in 2005 closing the year at 53.09 compared to 56.28 as of end-2004.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

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Inflation ...

From page B1

cast. "Unlike last year, the El Niño weather problem is no longer [a factor] this year," Abola said.

The NSO said the increase in the prices of clothing items decelerated from 3.2 to 3.1 percent, while those for housing and repairs slowed down from 4.5 to 4.2 percent. Inflation for fuel, light and water dropped from 18.5 to 15.9 percent.

On a month-on-month basis, inflation in April stood at 0.1 percent, slower from the 0.4 percent recorded in March.

The year-on-year inflation for April was at the lower end of the 7 to 7.7-percent forecast made by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The BSP yesterday said that the deceleration of inflation supported its move to keep its key interest rates unchanged for the seventh consecutive month this May. The central bank's key interest rates were kept at 7.5 percent for borrowing and 9.75 percent for lending.

The BSP sees inflation for the full year settling at an average of 7.1 percent, better than the 7.6 percent registered in 2005.

SSS gets GMA's support ...

From page B1

But the deal was stalled when a senator, who wanted the SSS shares placed on the auction block, filed a petition with the high court to block the deal. SM-BDO has also filed a case with the SC to compel the SSS to complete the sale of its EPCIB shares.

The SSS has to maintain the status quo until the high tribunal has ruled on the cases, Dela Paz said.

Last January, GSIS general manager Winston Garcia announced that two foreign buyers had offered to pay a high premium for the GSIS' 12 percent stake in EPCIB. Garcia has yet to bare the names of the buyers.

Since then, Garcia reportedly has been nagging the SSS to sell its stake in EPCIB. The mystery buyers are said to be willing to pay P95 a share—more than twice the P43 a share that the SSS had agreed with SM-BDO two and a half years ago. The SSS has been warding off the pressure to sell.

[The President] knows our situation," Dela Paz said. "[She] expects us to make a business decision on what we, the managers, believe is best for our institutions. She is not interfering."

In an interview, Garcia said that he was not "insisting" on the deal.

"I am just saying that the price of our stock should be at least P92 [per share]," Garcia said. "Our members paid P92 for these shares, and we should get the same."

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RP, Japan OK \$6.5-B currency swap deal

By Doris C. Dumlaog

THE PHILIPPINES HAS ENTERED into a fresh \$6.5-billion bilateral currency swap deal with Japan that provides short-term liquidity support to ward off external shocks similar to the Asian currency turmoil of 1997.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday announced that it had signed with the Bank of Japan a second and much bigger swap arrangement under the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) at the sidelines of the Asian Development Bank annual meetings in Hyderabad, India last Thursday.

Similar swap arrangements are also being worked out by the BSP—acting as the agent for the Department of Finance—with South Korea (\$3 billion) and China (\$1 billion).

The swap deal with Japan will be effective for three years and may be extended by mutual agreement between the BSP and the BOJ, as the agent for the Minister of Finance of Japan.

The agreement will enable the two countries to swap their

respective currencies for US dollars. The Philippines can swap up to \$6 billion while Japan can swap up to \$500 million in the event need for balance of payments or short-term liquidity support arises.

The new agreement form part of the measures adopted by the Asean+3 (Japan, Korea and China) Finance Ministers during their meeting on May 4, 2005 in Istanbul, Turkey, in pursuit of the CMI second stage.

The CMI second stage aims to enhance the effectiveness of the CMI as a foreign exchange liquidity support mechanism.

Under the second stage, Japan's swap commitment was doubled from \$3 billion to \$6 billion while the BSP made a new swap commitment of \$500 million.

The CMI has created a network of 16 bilateral currency swap arrangements among the central banks of Japan, China, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand to fend off potential speculative attacks against their respective currencies.

Demand from call centers, IT firms jacks up office space rates

Increases to continue for two years before tapering off

By Daxim L. Lucas

VACANCY LEVELS FOR PRIME OFFICE space in Metro Manila's two main business districts continue to drop as call centers and information technology companies hog the limited supply, a leading property management firm said yesterday.

More importantly, the rent and capital price appreciation will likely continue to rise for two more years before tapering off in 2008, officials of CB Richard Ellis Philippines Inc. said in a press briefing.

Already, the company said strong demand has pushed down vacancy levels for prime or "grade A" Makati office space to 4.3 percent at the end of the first quarter from 4.9 percent as of end-2005.

Some of the newest and most attractive office buildings in Makati are already reporting either no vacancies or no available large or contiguous floor space, the company said.

Contiguous floor spaces are important for call centers and business process outsourcing (BPO) firms which depend on large floor plans to help manage hundreds of staffers at computer workstations.

Because of the dwindling supply of office space,

Richard Ellis said the average rent for prime office space rose by 6.1 percent in the first quarter of 2006 to P610 per square meter from only P575 per square meter in the previous quarter.

"Leasing rates in some prime Makati buildings are already at P700 per square meter or above," corporate services director Joey Radovan said. "The tenants are still lining up to sign [contracts] at that level."

He added that major multinational corporations continue to either outsource their call center and back office functions to the Philippines or inquire about the possibility of doing so.

"With outsourcing growth not expected to plateau in the near future, many developers are now bullish enough to start new office projects that are specifically designed with call centers and BPO clients in mind," he said.

The same trend can be observed in the slightly cheaper Ortigas central business district where prime office space can now be rented at P450 per square meter, and the vacancy rate has fallen to 5.4 percent.

The supply crunch has even pushed down the vacancy rates of some "grade B" buildings in good locations to single-digit levels, the company said.

In spite of the rising rent and falling vacancies, real estate costs in the Philippines remains competitive in comparison to the cost of real estate in other locations.

The country also provides a well educated, English speaking workforce that is able to provide high quality customer service, especially to North American-based clients.

"The call centers and BPOs are coming to the Philippines not just because of the low cost of doing business here," CB Richard Ellis chair Rick Santos said. "They are coming here because their clients demand it."

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LandBank offering special financing facility

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES, THROUGH leasing arm LBP Leasing Corp., is offering a special financing program that will allow companies to provide free shuttle services to their employees.

LBP Leasing general manager Manuel Lopez said the loan facility, which was open to both government and private corporations, would enable private and public sector companies to acquire new buses or coasters that

they could use in providing free transportation to employees to and from their workplace.

He said this could serve as an additional non-wage benefit to employees as they would no longer have to spend that much on transportation.

To enable as many public and private sector firms to take advantage of this loan facility, he said LBP Leasing placed no ceiling on the

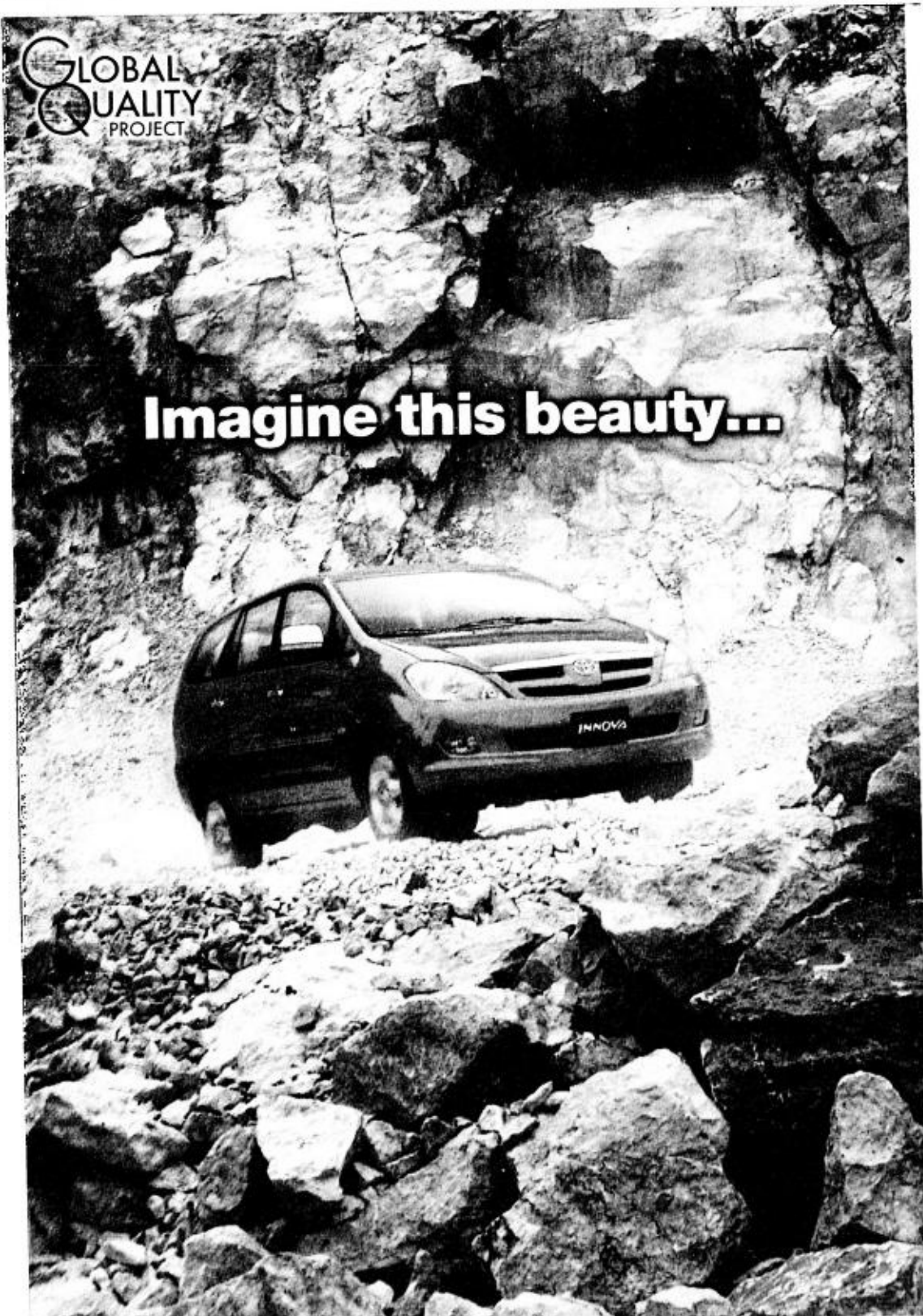
amount of loans.

He said the leasing firm would accept all loan applications, provided all the required documents would be submitted.

The documentary requirements include an information sheet that interested firms will have to fill out, company profile, audited financial statements and income tax returns for the past three years, list of company officers, and borrowing resolution.

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Costly oil to cut Asia's growth

ADB sees region's economy slowing by 0.6 percentage points

HYDERABAD, INDIA—HIGH OIL PRICES may shave off at least 0.6 percentage points from Asia's overall economic growth, the chief economist of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) told AFP.

"There are two aspects to the oil price increase. One is the magnitude of the increase and the second is the duration," Ifzal Ali said noting that if the increase lasts for a year, growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) will slow.

"If you have an oil price increase of about \$10, from \$60 to \$70, developing Asia's GDP growth rate will be shaved off by about 0.6 percentage points," Ali said on the sidelines of the ADB's 39th annual general meeting being held in southern India.

Oil prices headed back toward an all-time high of \$75.35 a barrel hit on April 21 amid ongoing concerns over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Ali said slower growth rates will vary by country with China down by about 1 percentage point, India by 1.1 percentage point and Thailand by 1.8 percentage point.

He said government-driven subsidies to keep prices on oil products low were not sustainable in the long run.

"There are many countries in Asia, including India, where the process have a long way to go. Either there are nations where subsidies are absorbed in the budget like Thailand or absorbed in the balance sheet of state-owned petroleum companies like in India," Ali said.

India produces about 30 million tons of crude oil annually but it imports 70 percent of its energy needs.

The state-owned oil firms bear the brunt of the subsidies for gasoline, kerosene and diesel sold below cost.

India's Congress party-led coalition government has not hiked fuel prices after crude-oil costs surged in 2006 because of the negative consumer backlash such a decision would have on ongoing elections in five Indian states.

The government is expected to raise prices after the elections end later in May, according to statements by Finance Minister P. Chidambaram.

According to Petroleum Minister Murli Deora, state oil companies have subsidized 393 billion rupees (\$8.7 billion) worth of liquefied petroleum gas, kerosene, diesel and petrol, during the fiscal year ended March 31.

Last year, Thailand and Indonesia dismantled their subsidies and growth rates plummeted in the fourth quarter as prices went up, economist Ali said.

But those governments created special programs to help the poor, he noted.

"In Indonesia, they generated about \$8 billion and \$3 billion were earmarked to target the real needy people," he said.

Sadakazu Tanagaki, the Japanese finance minister, also warned of major risks after meeting with his counterparts from China and Korea.

"We noted that the prospects of three countries' economic growth for 2006 are positive ... although the continuous high oil price and an upward trend of interest rates in the world may pose a major risk to the regional economy," he said.

ADB president Haruhiko Kuroda said the record-high oil prices were bound to fall.

"At \$75 a barrel, it's unsustainable. Some geopolitical events may destabilize the market. But apart from that, the current level is very high," he said.

In its 2006 growth forecast, the ADB cut its estimate to 7.2 percent for Asia from 7.4 percent last year "based on the assumption that oil prices will gradually soften," he said. **AFP**

Oil recovers, Asian stocks follow Wall St.

SINGAPORE—OIL PRICES REBOUNDED ON Friday after their fall helped drive US shares to a fresh six-year closing high and Asian stocks were mostly firmer even though major markets were closed for holidays.

US crude futures rose to above \$70 a barrel, as buyers cautiously returned to the market after a two-day slump wiped \$5 off prices. Gold hit a new 25-year high on persistent fund buying sparked by a weak dollar and tension over Iran's nuclear plans.

The US dollar recovered from a one-year trough against the euro and clawed higher against the yen and sterling as traders worried that strength in US jobs data could reverse the dollar's three-week sell-off.

Stock markets in Japan, Hong Kong and South Korea were shut on Friday, but Taiwan shares rose to a fresh 5-1/2-year intraday high, led by financial stocks such as Chang Hwa Bank.

Australian shares were also higher due to gains in miners such as BHP Billiton on the back to firmer copper prices, which soared nearly 8 percent on Thursday.

"Copper and gold prices were firmer overnight and that is supporting the resources sector," said Guy Hutchings, chief investment officer with Tower Australia, who helps manage about A\$1 billion (\$770 million) in local shares.

On Friday, copper prices were steady at \$7,675 a ton on Friday.

Macquarie Bank Ltd. rose nearly 2 percent after it said it was setting up a consortium to make a cash bid for Australia's biggest ports operator, Patrick Corp. Ltd., challenging an agreed A\$6 billion (\$4.6 billion) offer by Toll Holdings Ltd., the country's largest logistics company.

Singapore's Strait Times index was 0.26 percent lower.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones industrial average rose 0.34 percent, ending the day not far from their record set at the height of the Internet boom, as the Nasdaq Composite Index advanced 0.87 percent.

The euro was around \$1.2695 after hitting a high of \$1.2723 in New York on Thursday after ECB president Jean-Claude Trichet emphasized the central bank's vigilance on inflation.

Against the Japanese yen, the dollar was last at around 113.70 yen, after finishing at 113.61 in New York.

Traders saw an outside chance of a dollar bounce should US payroll figures later on Friday handily beat forecasts of a 200,000 employment rise and a 4.7-percent jobless rate.

"One has to question whether the market will react to anything other than a dollar-negative number," said Alan Ruskin, chief international strategist at RBS Greenwich Capital.

"After all, the dollar has all but ignored very positive US real economy numbers for the past fortnight, in notable contrast to the bond market." **Reuters**

EBay sees faster growth

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA—EBAY INC. CHIEF executive officer Meg Whitman on Thursday promised investors that faster growth and market share gains lay ahead, but left the company's near-term outlook unchanged as international sales growth slows and it steps up investments in new businesses.

Speaking at the San Jose-based company's annual analysts' meeting, Whitman said revenue would grow around 31 percent this year to between \$5.7 billion to \$5.9 billion, reaffirming a forecast that disappointed Wall Street last month, sending shares down 9 percent the following day.

"We plan to grow our revenues even faster and gain share in our addressable markets," over the longer term, Whitman said, without giving details.

But six hours of executive presentations—including 321 slides detailing the company's businesses—did little to soothe investor concerns over maturing growth in its core auctions business, and eBay Nasdaq shares ended the day off 6 cents at \$34.11.

Whitman said the company's best growth opportunity was cross-selling between its three main businesses—eBay auctions and shopping, PayPal online payments and Skype Web telephone service—which she dubbed "the power of three."

Piper Jaffray analyst Safa Rashtchy said PayPal remained the most promising part of eBay's businesses in the near-term. But he was pessimistic whether eBay could gain market share in the overall e-commerce business as rivals such as Google Inc. target its markets. **Reuters**



A VENDOR sits behind a tray of roasted ducks and chickens at a local market in downtown Hanoi. An Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation ministerial meeting on bird flu is being held in the Vietnamese central city of Da Nang. Officials from 21 Apec economies gather here for a three-day meeting aimed at outlining an action plan to tackle bird flu outbreaks worldwide. **AFP**

Europe back on growth track, eurozone finance ministers say

BRUSSELS—BRUSHING OFF HIGH OIL prices and rising interest rates, euro zone finance ministers declared the region's economy firmly back on the expansion track on Thursday.

The ministers were joined by European Central Bank president Jean-Claude Trichet, who said hours earlier in Frankfurt he would have to raise credit costs to avert inflation if growth in the region continued at the current pace.

That was a far cry from 2005, which finished with a whimper as economic growth in the last three months slowed dramatically in the currency bloc as a whole and ground to a standstill in Italy and Germany.

Dutch Finance Minister Gerrit Zalm summed up the new mood of confidence, dismissing oil price surges which have produced profits of up to \$1,000 per second for oil firms as a risk in terms of inflation but not in terms of economic growth.

Jean-Claude Juncker, Luxembourg's prime minister, said after chairing the talks that there was no sign at all that higher oil prices had had a knock-on effect of triggering large

wage rises that could worsen inflation.

"The recovery is well on track and broadening. We're nearing if not above potential," he told a news conference.

The ministers met after Trichet said the independent ECB was increasingly worried about inflation risks and would raise its key policy rates if and as needed.

That was taken by the bulk of economists to mean he was set on raising the cost of borrowing in June for a third time since the start of December, having chosen to leave rates where they are—2.50 percent—at this week's meeting.

Austrian Finance Minister Karl-Heinz Grasser, who just a few months ago was publicly voicing fears that rate rises could hurt a still-fragile economic upswing, sounded calmer in that regard.

He said global growth, and that of Europe as a result, was looking healthy despite it all.

"I find it encouraging that we can get more than 4 percent (rate of world growth) with this oil price and interest rate climate," he told reporters as he arrived for the talks in Brussels. **AP**

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE					
(As of May 5, 2006)					
STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	6.5	6.6	6.3	6.5	64,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36.5	37	36	36	660,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	65	68.5	65	68.5	7,102,000
China Banking Corp.	830	880	825	880	4,590
Citystate Savings Bank	20.25	20.25	20.25	20.25	500
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.45	0.46	0.45	0.45	8,530,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	73	73	72	72	71,000
International Exch. Bank	39	39.5	38.5	39.5	99,100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	41	42.5	40.5	42.5	2,974,500
Philippine National Bank	34.5	35	34.5	35	36,600
Phil. Savings Bank	39.5	40	39.5	40	7,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	17.25	17.25	16.75	17	187,000
Security Bank Corp.	54.5	55.5	54	54	757,800
Union Bank of the Phil.	42	42.5	41.5	41.5	187,600
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	30	30	30	30	12,600
Manulife Financial Corp.	3350	3350	3350	3350	228,000
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.02	1.02	1	1	1,100
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	200	200	200	200	3,100
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2140	2140	2140	2140	1,410
Investment Corp.	1.38	1.4	1.32	1.34	9,197,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	45	45	45	45	1,204,100
First Phil Hlths Corp.	44.5	46	44.5	46	1,975,300
Manila Electric Co. A	13.25	13.5	13.25	13.25	79,500
Manila Electric Co. B	19	19.75	19	19.5	1,064,200
Manila Water Co. Inc.	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	23,402,000
Palawan Waterworks Corp.	4.45	4.75	4.45	4.7	28,832,000
Petrone Corp.	1.02	1.02	0.98	0.98	1,450,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy					
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.45	3.45	3.4	3.4	84,000
CADP Group Corp.	45	45	45	45	2,000
Can Azucar De Tiarac	3	3	3	3	2,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23.25	23.25	23	23	106,100
Jollibee Foods Corp.	36	37	36	36.5	1,270,600
RFM Corp.	0.81	0.82	0.81	0.82	270,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	33.5	34.5	33	33.1	3,359,000
San Miguel Corp. A	6.35	6.45	6.3	6.3	2,478,000
San Miguel Corp. B	82	84	82	84	166,900
Unimark Holdings Corp.	23.5	23.5	23	23.25	2,954,300
Vitarich Corp.	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.25	50,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.38	0.39	0.36	0.37	11,670,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.82	1.84	1.76	1.8	12,599,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	1.4	1.42	1.3	1.3	90,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	5.1	5.3	5.1	5.2	3,807,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.2	1.38	1.2	1.24	410,000
CHEMICALS					
Corro-Coat Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	14,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.74	250,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.0975	0.105	0.095	0.1	34,000,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	190,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.0085	0.008	0.0085	21,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	10,000,000
Ayala Corp.	405	430	405	430	988,130
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.55	0.6	0.53	0.53	390,000
Abotiz Equity Ventures	6.1	6.3	6.1	6.2	3,865,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	10	11.5	10	11.5	30,800,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.026	0.027	0.026	0.026	7,503,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.24	0.24	0.235	0.24	3,340,000
APC Group Inc.	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	346,000,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	1.06	1.14	1.06	1.08	9,423,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.16	1.16	1.12	1.12	21,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	0.98	1.04	0.98	1.02	21,430,000
Bacolon Cons Indus Inc.	4.85	4.9	4.7	4.75	6,200,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.6	3.75	3.6	3.65	2,757,000
Fininvest Dev. Corp.	0.89	0.91	0.89	0.9	700,000
F&J Prime E Holdings Corp.	1.66	1.76	1.66	1.7	2,858,000
House Of Investments Inc.	7.8	8.1	7.6	7.7	2,500,000
I.G. Sam Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	1,100,000
Medco Holdings	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	1,000,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	1,000,000
Pacific	0.22	0.225	0.215	0.215	4,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.21	0.21	460,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.16	0.165	0.155	0.155	11,400,000
Unipol Corp.	227	240	227	239	306,640
SM Investments Corp.	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.91	100,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.0725	0.075	0.0725	0.0725	26,000,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co.	0.125	0.13	0.125	0.125	3,210,000
Wellx Industries Inc.					
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	14.75	14.75	14	14.75	31,591,800
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	80,000
Belle Corp.	1.3	1.38	1.3	1.34	35,409,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	400,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.31	0.33	0.3	0.3	3,630,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	2.24	2.32	2.22	2.32	3,388,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.74	1.84	1.74	1.78	290,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.02	1.1	1.02	1.1	471,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. B	1.12	1.2	1.08	1.18	645,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.25	0.22	0.22	0.22	7,150,000
EIS Realty Developers Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	70,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.68	0.69	0.66	0.68	35,900,000
Ever-Goteco Resources	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	2,000,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.67	0.7	0.67	0.68	80,000
Fininvest Land Inc.	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	185,000,000
Goteco Land Inc.	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	100,000
Interport Res.	0.0075	0.0075	0.007	0.007	20,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0075	0.0075	0.007	0.007	45,000,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	10,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	450,000
Phil. Estate Land Inc.	0.6	0.72	0.59	0.59	8,270,000
Megaworld Corp. Inc.	1.6	1.64	1.58	1.64	74,244,000
Metrol Pacific Corp.	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.25	14,800,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.29	0.31	0.29	0.3	510,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	11	11.25	11	11.25	695,200
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.35	650,000
SM Development Corp.	1.78	1.8	1.78	1.78	2,086,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.2	8.3	8.1	8.1	12,122,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.12	0.125	3,670,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13.75	14.5	13.75	14.5	234,800
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.14	1.25	1.14	1.28	37,686,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	970	990	970	985	82,880
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	3.1	3.3	3.1	3.25	8,983,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2070	2130	2070	2125	200,290
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					

RP Q1 results may be strong but outlook still weak, says S&P

By Doris C. Dumlaog

ALTHOUGH THE country has posted better-than-expected fiscal results for the first quarter of the year, global rating firm Standard & Poor's still believes that the fiscal outlook remains "weak" due to pressures to boost infrastructure spending.

In an Asian sovereign commentary released yesterday, S&P said credit quality within the region was generally favorable, despite high oil prices, rising interest rates worldwide, and an uptick in inflation rates.

In the case of the Philippines, S&P is wary of unabated political tensions, even though the country has managed to improve revenue collection.

"The deficit for the year should be met easily, but the fiscal outlook remains weak," S&P said.

The rating firm explained that the weak outlook stemmed from "a need to increase spending ... to lift future growth prospects, even as revenue increases."

S&P said the situation in the country was relatively calm. But it did not rule out the possibility of a renewed effort to impeach President Macapagal-Arroyo in July or August, when the time limit of 12 months would have passed since the last impeachment attempt.

"In S&P's view, there is no credible unified opposition to the incumbent, and no credible alternative government."

"Nevertheless, the disruption of any future impeachment effort and general politicking are likely to distract from economic reform," the rating firm said. "And without more proactive policies and fiscal flexibility to address longer term economic issues, credit improvements are likely to be limited."

S&P also noted that rising interest rates are expected in many parts of Asia, but this uptrend should not choke off growth in the region. It said tighter monetary policy in the developed world, particularly in the US, as well as higher oil prices, would likewise put pressure on Asian central banks to raise rates as well.

"In economies where conditions remain relatively frail—such as the Philippines—these hikes are likely to be small due to the need to support investment and employment growth," S&P said.

It noted that interest rate increases in the Philippines had been held off because of spare industrial capacity and absence of wage pressure.

"This pause in raising lending rates should boost domestic growth," S&P said. During its meeting on Thursday, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas policy-making Monetary Board kept its rates steady for the 7th straight month.

The BSP's overnight borrowing rate remains at 7.5 percent. The overnight lending rate is still 9.75 percent.

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Adventure GLX Gas	733,000	89,950	30,491	21,729	17,389	14,969
Adventure GLX Diesel	763,000	66,450	31,739	22,618	18,100	15,582
Adventure GLS Sport Gas M/T	830,000	84,500	34,526	24,804	19,690	16,950
Adventure GLS Sport Gas A/T	883,000	112,450	36,731	26,175	20,947	18,032
Adventure GLS Sport Diesel (1600 cc)	830,000	79,500	34,526	24,804	19,690	16,950
Adventure Super Sport Diesel Std.	871,000	120,650	36,231	25,820	20,662	17,787

* Figures in bold represent ZERO Interest Plans. • All plans subject to bank approval.

50% D/P	12 mos.	18 mos.	24 mos.	36 mos.	48 mos.	60 mos.
366,500	30,542	21,291	17,004	12,117	9,697	8,348
381,500	31,792	21,194	15,896	11,711	9,371	8,067
415,000	34,583	23,056	18,445	13,145	10,519	9,055
441,500	37,833	25,894	20,674	14,733	11,790	10,150
415,000	34,583	23,056	17,292	12,978	10,386	8,941
435,500	38,174	26,127	20,847	14,856	11,889	10,234

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OPENINGS FOR:

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- Male or Female
- With previous experience as Subdivision or Condominium Administrator

LAWYER

- Male or Female
- New Graduates, preferably from PBU, MLQU, UST
- **EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT (Office of the President)**
- Female
- Multi-tasker
- Computer literate
- With previous experience

ACCOUNTANT

- Female, Accounting Graduate
- Computer Literate

OFFICE STAFF

- Male or Female
- College Graduate
- Computer Literate

Apply in person with your comprehensive resumes from 9 am to 12 noon on May 13, 2006 Saturday at:
UNIT 426 CHATEAU VERDE CONDOMINIUM,
VALLE VERDE I, BGY. UGONG, PASIG CITY
dlo_0227@yahoo.com

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that
SOUTHLUZ MOTORCYCLE DIST. INC.
Provisional Receipt
Series No. 3251-3300 was reported lost in
Lucena Branch, any receipt issued from this
series will not be honored.
(PDI-May 4, 5 & 6, 2006)

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OBITUARIES**ARMANDO HEBREO
REMO, SR.**

February 3, 1925 – April 28, 2006

Peacefully joined our Creator on April 28, 2006
at the age of 81.

His wife, Margarita Garchitorea;
children Linda, Bobby, Jun, Tess, Eden,
Shirley, Nestor, & Jose; grandchildren and
great grandchildren request the pious readers
to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Interment will be on Saturday, May 6, 2006
at the Goa, Camarines Sur Catholic Cemetery
after the 2:00 p.m. Mass.



Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines will receive sealed bids on May 16, 2006, 2:00 p.m., Ground Floor, AMD
Conference Room of the DBP Head Office, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City for the following properties
on CASH BASIS:

CODE NO.	DESCRIPTION	AREA (sq.m.)	LOCATION	Minimum Bid
REAL ESTATE				
RIZAL				
BLGA-01	House and lot (TCT No. N-53026) with bodega/poultry house	879	Burgos, Rodriguez	P 799,600.00
BLGA-02	Residential lot (TCT No. R-3781)	1,057	Along Berkley St. and Mission Hills Boulevard, Sta. Barbara Luxury Estate, Fillinvest Mission Hills, Bo. Cotaque (now San Roque) Antipolo City fronting Subdivision Clubhouse.	P 8,342,000.00
BLGA-03	Residential lot (TCT No. R-3760)	1,236	- do -	P 6,798,000.00
BLGA-04	Residential lot (TCT No. 663764)	308	Along Clarkson St. Sta. Catalina I, Fillinvest Mission Hills, Bo. Muzon (now Mahabang Parang), Angono	P 1,540,000.00
(CHATELAIN - Sale on "as is where is" basis)				
AM-PY-126	MIT "COS ODYSSEY", an ABS-classed self-propelled occasional oil tanker, welded mild steel hull, single deck, 496.64 tons-GT, 315.36 NT, built 1998, powered by two (2) units CATERPILLAR Marine Diesel Engine with standard accessories and navigational equipments		Barge Pool, BASECO Breakwater, Manila Bay, Manila	P 65,269,400.00

BIDDERS ARE REMINDED:

1. To inspect the properties to determine their actual condition before the bidding;
2. To submit in DBP's official bid form available at the AMD-Acquired Assets, Ground Floor, DBP Head Office during office hours; and
3. To be on time. No bids will be accepted once unsealing of the bids commences. The sale shall be subject to other terms and conditions which may be imposed by the Bank.

DBP RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS
AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE BANK. THE DECISION OF THE BANK IS FINAL AND BINDING.

For inquiries, please call telephone numbers: 892-1566/893-7172 or 818-9511 local 2158/2159 for Code starting with AM and
(047) 237-2232 and 818-9511 loc. 1434 for Code BLGA.

ASSET MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

(PDI-May 6 & 7, 2006)

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resumé
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- Professional Relationship Skills
- Medical background preferred

Send
resumé to

**K&A Insurance
Brokers, Inc.**

Unit 6-0, 6th Floor,
Vernida 1 Condominium
120 Amoroso Street,
Legaspi Village,
Makati City, Philippines
ATTN: Isabel Tolentino
Tel: (632) 759-3122, 23 & 25
Fax: (632) 759-3126
Email address:
raschnabel@globalines.com.ph

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

In addition to the list earlier published on 23 March 2006 involving
cancelled and delisted agencies the following companies do not
have valid licenses to recruit landbased and seabased workers for
overseas employment:

DELISTED AGENCIES (Agencies that failed to comply with the
conditions for the grant of its license)

1. A-M Phil. Professional Services Corp.
2. Big Circle International Manpower
Management Agency
3. Emmerl International Inc.
4. Jang International Promotions &
Manpower Corporation
5. Mecprego International Inc.
6. Maritima de Manila MGM Systems Inc.
7. Princess Talent Center Production Inc.
8. Rising Sun Int'l. Human Resources Inc.
9. Starlink International Promotion Inc.
10. Studio 85 Promotions Inc.
11. Vitamin & Cebu Artists International Inc.

The public is encouraged to report to the POEA any recruitment
activity conducted by the above-named entities.

HOTLINES : 722-1144 • 722-1155
E-MAIL : info@poea.gov.ph
Website : www.poea.gov.ph



**Philippine
Overseas
Employment
Administration**

(PDI - May 8, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
Governor Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital
INVITATION TO APPLY FOR
ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Supply and Delivery of Hospital Equipment
(Re-bid) and Supplies (Gen. Appropriations Act 2006
& Continuing Appropriation)

1. The GOVERNOR CELESTINO GALLARES MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, through the General
Appropriations Act 2006 and Continuing Appropriations intends to apply the sum of Php
11,092,500.00 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract
for **Supply and Delivery of Hospital Equipment (Re-bid) (P1,140,000.00), and Supplies**
(P9,952,500.00). Bids received in excess of the ABC shall automatically be rejected at Bid opening.
2. The GOVERNOR CELESTINO GALLARES MEMORIAL HOSPITAL now invites Bids from eligible
Bidders for **Supply and Delivery of Hospital Equipment and Supplies**. Delivery of the GOODS
required is: **for supplies 10 calendar days and for equipment 30-60 calendar days**. The
description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/
fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184
(R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino
citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital
stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or
regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens or organizations of a country the
laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act
5163 (R.A. 5163) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass
the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the
Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-
qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial
requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and
Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from GOVERNOR CELESTINO GALLARES
MEMORIAL HOSPITAL BAC Chairman, Luz R. Rosales and inspect the Bidding Documents at the
address given below from 9:00 - 5:00 p.m.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address
given below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Php 1,000.00 per
category for supplies and Php 1,500.00 for equipment. The method of payment will be Cash.
The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized
representative.
6. The GOVERNOR CELESTINO GALLARES MEMORIAL HOSPITAL will hold a Pre-Bid Conference
open to all interested parties on **May 24, 2006 / 2:00 PM at GCGMH Audio Visual Room**.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the **GCGMH Audio Visual Room on or**
before 10:00 A.M. on the scheduled opening of bids per category. All Bids must be
accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following forms. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Form of Bid Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid
1. Cash	One percent (1%)
2. GSIS Bond	Two and a half percent (2 1/2%)

8. Bid opening shall be on the following schedules listed below at **10:00 A.M. at GCGMH Audio-
Visual Room**. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who
choose to attend at the address below.

Date	Category
June 5, 2006	Miscellaneous Supplies
	Housekeeping Supplies
	Dietary Supplies
June 7, 2006	Engineering Supplies
	Medical / Surgical Supplies
June 13, 2006	Dental Supplies
	X-ray Supplies
	Office Supplies
	Medical Oxygen Supplies
June 15, 2006	Linens Supplies
	Drugs and Medicine Supplies
June 21, 2006	Medical Equipment
	Non-Medical Equipment
	Laboratory Supplies

9. The GOVERNOR CELESTINO GALLARES MEMORIAL HOSPITAL reserves the right
to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any
time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder
or Bidders.

Governor Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital
Luz R. Rosales, BAC Chairman
Dormitory Manager
Miguel Parrae St. Tagbilaran City, Bohol
Tel. No. (038) 411-4868 / (038) 411-4869 / (038) 501-7531 loc. 242
Fax No. (038) 411-4831
E-mail address: gcgmh@globalines.com.ph

(Sgd.) LUZ R. ROSALES
Chairman, Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI - April 30 & May 8, 2006)



PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
A Subsidiary of Bases Conversion Development Authority

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION (PPMC), through its Bids and Awards
Committee (BAC), invites suppliers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project: **PROCUREMENT OF MATERIALS FOR THE AIRPORT
PERIMETER FENCING PROJECT**
Location: **SAN FERNANDO AIRPORT, CANAOY, SAN FERNANDO CITY, LA
UNION**
Brief Description: **TO SUPPLY, DELIVER MATERIALS FOR THE SAN FERNANDO
AIRPORT FENCE**
Approved Budget
For the Contract (ABC): **P 2,602,888.80**
Contract Duration: **Thirty (30) Calendar Days**
Delivery Period: **Thirty (30) Calendar Days**

Prospective bidders should have undertaken a similar contract within the last five (5) years with an
amount of at least 50% of the above ABC. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary
Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest
calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security,
Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be
governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations
(IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	May 19-22, 2006
2. Pre-bid Conference/Site Inspection	May 23, 2006
3. Opening of Bids	June 5, 2006, 9:00 a.m.
4. Bid Evaluation	June 5, 2006
5. Post-qualification	June 6 - 7, 2006
6. Notice of Award	June 15, 2006

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable
amount of One thousand pesos (P1,000.00) to the PPMC Cashier.

PPMC assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any
expenses incurred in the preparation and submission of the bid.

Approved by:
(Sgd.) ATTY. ANTHONY C. MANGUIAT
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee
Vice President & CEO

(PDI-May 6 & 13, 2006)

OBITUARIES

The Board of Directors,
Officers and Employees of
AYALA LAND, INC.

extend their condolences to the family of

JOSE Y. CAMPOS

who passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on May 1, 2006.

Death Notice

RALPH "Ike" REBUSTILLO RAYALA
Died on April 26, 2006

His remains lie in state at the family
home in Ilaor Sur, Oas, Albay. Burial will
be today at 2 p.m. after the Mass at Oas
North Cemetery.

BLAS B. LABAD
Died on May 3, 2006

His body lies in state at the family
residence at Purok 7, Upper Bagumbayan,
Malalag, Davao Del Sur.

JUANITA B. BAGA
Died on May 2, 2006

Her remains lie in state at La Funeraria
Paz, Aranceta Avenue, Quezon City.

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who
believes in Me will live, even though he dies,
and whoever believes in Me will never die."
John 11:25-26

The family of the late
Wayne Howard Butler

wishes to inform relatives and friends
of Wayne's passing away on
May 1, 2006 at the age of 58.

His bereaved wife Jenny; sons Toby
and Sam and daughters Rachel and
Emma; and all relatives request their
friends to pray for the eternal repose of
Wayne's soul.

Funeral services will be held in Adelaide,
South Australia.

The Family
of
Jose Y. Campos

who passed away peacefully in the Grace of our Lord
on May 1, 2006 at the age of 84

His loving wife
BEATRICE

His loving children
JOY
BUTCH & OLLIE
JEFFREY
ELIZABETH

His loving grandchildren
CLINTON & JACQUELINE
CHRISSY
MIKEY
JEANETTE
JACLYN & LUKE
JAY
JANELLE
JAMIE
NIÑA

wishes to announce that the Holy Mass at Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City,
on Monday, May 8th, will be offered promptly at one o'clock in the afternoon. Cremation will follow.

Please omit flowers.



Our Dearly Beloved
Nanay Menang

FILOMENA SARMIENTO-DE GUZMAN

of Marikina City
peacefully joined our Lord
on May 4, 2006 at the age of 89.

Her husband Lupo (†), loving children, grandchildren and
great grandchildren and other relatives request the pious readers
to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Chapels 3 & 4, Loyola Memorial
Park, Marikina City.

Interment will be tomorrow, May 7, 2006 at the Loyola
Memorial Park, Marikina City after the 3:00 p.m. Mass.

In Loving Memory

On the Thirty Fifth Death Anniversary of

DR. BIENVENIDO B. ERAÑA

Holy Masses will be offered today, Saturday,
May 6, 2006 at the following churches:

SHRINE OF MARY, QUEEN OF PEACE (Our Lady of EDSA) EDSA cor. Ortigas Avenue, Quezon City	8:00 AM
STA. CRUZ PARISH Sta. Cruz, Manila	8:00 AM
MT. CARMEL SHRINE J. Rodriguez, New Manila, Quezon City	6:00 PM
SANTUARIO DE SAN ANTONIO Forbes Park, Makati	6:15 PM

We, his family, request relatives, friends and the pious readers
to join us in our prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

MARIO M. DIZON

(Retired Judge of Cebu & Bataan RTC)

Peacefully joined our Creator on May 4, 2006 at the age of 75.

His loving daughters & sons-in-law Della & Ely and Theresa
& Anthony, grandchildren Trishia, Tanya & Thea; sister Susan,
brother Arsenlo and other relatives and friends, request the pious
readers to join them in praying for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His body lies in state at the Santuario Garden & Chapels - Capilla
Del Betania, J.P. Rizal St., Talisay, Balanga City, Bataan.

Interment will be tomorrow, May 7, 2006 at the Eternal Shrine
Memorial Park after the 2 pm Mass at the St. Joseph's Cathedral,
Balanga City, Bataan.

In Loving Memory

of the Third Death Anniversary of

ROLANDO V. CRUZ

who peacefully joined his Creator on May 6, 2003



His family and loved ones
request relatives and friends to join
them in praying for the eternal
repose of his soul.

Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will be offered at the following churches:

Christ the King Parish Church, Greenmeadows	May 6, 6 p.m.
Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park	May 6, 6 p.m.
Immaculate Concepcion Church, Pasig	May 6, 6 p.m.
Holy Family Parish Church, Kapitolyo	May 6, 6 p.m.
St. James the Great Parish, Alabang	May 6, 6 p.m.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."

2 Corinthians 5:8

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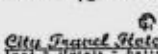


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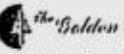
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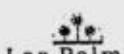
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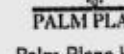
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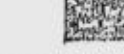
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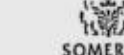
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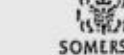
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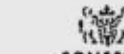
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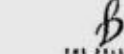
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Mother's Day Blowout at The Bellevue

ISN'T IT TIME YOU TREATED THE MOST SPECIAL woman in your life to a relaxing holiday she truly deserves? This May 12-14, The Bellevue Hotel, southern Metro Manila's first full-service business and leisure hotel, treats moms to a bash with the Mother's Day Blowout Promo. For only P4,600++ per night on a deluxe room accommodation, get a complimentary massage Shiatsu or Swedish body massage plus free use of sauna and Jacuzzi at The Bellevue Spa Club. In addition, get a 20 percent discount on dining outlets plus a welcome discount card on selected items at Rustans Department Store. Other perks include breakfast buffet at the Café D'Asie, use of swimming pool and gym facilities, complimentary shuttle service to nearby malls and business districts, welcome drink at 20/20 Entertainment Bar, welcome fruit plate, two bottles of mineral water replenished daily, and local newspaper. Moms are also invited to a Mother's Day Special Buffet lunch and dinner on May 14. Special gifts await moms on this day! Happy Mother's Day!

The Bellevue Hotel, the definitive dining destination south of Metro Manila, continues to please dessert lovers with saccharine de-



I
love
you
mom!

lights and succulent treats. This May, the hotel's expert pastry chefs present Sorrentino, a scrumptious cake combining cinnamon and amaretto in milk couverture mousse. Drop by

the lobby lounge and sample the best ensaymada and pastries. Sink your teeth into the sweetest pleasures only from The Bellevue. For inquiries, call 771-8181.

Here comes the summer sun at Waterfront

REVEL IN THE SUMMER SUN WITH STYLISH comforts. At Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino (WCCHC), not only are you assured of luxurious amenities and impeccable service, this summer, a whole lot more is in store. Welcome Here Comes the Summer Sun Room Promo. For only P3,800 net per night, be whisked away to deep slumber in an overnight stay in a Standard or Superior Room. But not without them spoiling you - fruit salad topped with ice cream at the Pool Aquarius - absolutely free! And when the heat of summer calls, cool down with complimentary access to the swimming pool, Casino Filipino and Citigym. There's more: Start your day right with a hearty breakfast buffet for two at the famous Uno. Get 10 percent discount on all your laundry services and 10 percent off on all Waterfront-owned restaurant purchases. In-

dulge in a gastronomic array of dining choices at the Hotel's Gourmet Walk - authentic Chinese cuisine at Tin Gow, oysters and premium wine at Treff Bar, Italy's sumptuous dishes at La Gondola, heart-warming, sweet treats at Madeleine and the best of international fair at Uno. Discount also applies to the Lobby Lounge, Café Fortuna and Pool Aquarius. Could you possibly ask for anything more?

Promo lasts until May 31. Rate is valid for local residents and expatriates living in the



Philippines. Prior reservations are required and subject to room availability. For inquiries and reservations, you may call (032) 232-6888 or Manila Sales and Reservations Office at (02) 687-0888. You can also visit the website at www.waterfronthotels.net.

Summer discounts at City Garden Hotel Makati



LET CITY GARDEN HOTEL MAKATI takes you on a grand summer getaway, check-in in one of its guest rooms that come for as low as P1,450 per person on twin-sharing basis. This already includes a sumptuous buffet breakfast at the Le Jardin.

After check-in, try out their fully-equipped gym or take a dip in their open-air swimming pool at the Roofdeck. Or better yet, you may opt to explore nearby Powerplant Mall at Rockwell or Glorietta Mall for some

shopping.

After a day of fun activities, book a massage or facial treatment for two at Body & Face by Mendez for as low as P700 per person or try its Relaxing Retreat Package for as low as P1,000 per person, for that much needed rejuvenation.

For dinner, do not miss the Roofdeck Bar & Grill. Offering sumptuous grilled specialties and appetizers, it has the best view of the metropolis at night. And if you hap-

pen to be checking in on the 14th of May, avail of its special dinner offer for only P700+ per person. A romantic end to a great day!

For more details, City Garden Hotel Makati is located in Makati's restaurant strip at 7870 Makati Avenue corner Kalayaan Avenue, Makati City. For reservations or inquiries, please call (02) 899-1111, or its domestic toll free number 1-800-101-GARDEN (427336), or at www.citygardenhotels.com.

Seminar package at the Garden Plaza Hotel

THE GARDEN PLAZA HOTEL AND SUITES, a standard boutique hotel in Paco, Manila is offering live-in and live-out seminar packages to corporate clients.

For a live-in seminar, the package includes room accommodation, set breakfast, set lunch and set dinner plus two snacks. Prices range from as low as P1,000 net per day per person up to P1,800 net per person per day.

A live-out package includes a set lunch, morning and afternoon snacks and costs only P450 net per person per day. The meal of course, is catered by the popular Old Swiss Inn restaurant, so the food is guaranteed to be of exceptional quality.

The packages also include complimentary use of the function room from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., use of the function room facilities such as overhead projector with screen, sound system, writing pads and pencils and free flowing of coffee or tea.

The Garden Plaza Hotel and Suites have four (4) function rooms for meeting and seminars that can accommodate from five (5) to one hundred (100) persons.

Located right beside the historic Paco Park, you may contact The Garden Plaza Hotel and Suites at 522-48435 to 38 or 526-2741.



THE PALM HOTELS HOUSEKEEPING TRAINING PROGRAM

The Palm Hotels composed of Las Palmas Hotel, Palm Plaza Hotel and The Executive Plaza Hotel recently had a 'Housekeeping Service and Skills Enrichment Program'. It was facilitated by the corporate executive housekeeper - Patty A. Martin assisted by the housekeeping management team. Shown in the photo are the team members of housekeeping with (second row, seated, second from left) Julie Lim and Lito Magcalas - Palm Plaza Hotel housekeeping supervisors, Sissie Alba - Las Palmas Hotel executive housekeeper, Connie Arles - corporate financial controller, Patty A. Martin - corporate executive housekeeper, Ram Manansala - Palm Plaza Hotel executive housekeeper, Rico Sergio Carandang - The Executive Plaza Hotel housekeeping supervisor, Haydee Palad (The Executive Plaza Hotel linen custodian and Anna Ria Toh - The Executive Plaza Hotel Housekeeping coordinator.

The Nestlé Creamery: A fun fulfilling experience

PINOYS ARE WELL-KNOWN TO BE ICE-CREAM lovers. Whether it's a graduation or a birthday party, ice-cream is one of the staple desserts served in every momentous of Filipinos, especially now that summer is just around the bend. That's why it's heartening to know that the Nestlé Creamery is now open to the public. Located in the heart of Quezon City, the Nestlé Creamery is an ice-cream parlor where the whole family and barkada can enjoy a totally fulfilling experience. The Nestlé Creamery counts among its many specialties old time favorites like ice cream concoctions such as the banana split, buco fiesta, macapuno pandan medley, etc. It also has ice cream cakes (tiramisu, eskimo decadence, banana split pie, mango ice cream pie, etc), and marble slab concoctions (wherein well-trained pastry chefs create different

types of fillings/custards that makes your favorite ice cream concoctions creamier). But more than being an ice-cream parlor, the Nestlé Creamery also serves hot meals such as chicken, seafood, meat and pasta dishes. This is to meet people's recent expectations that they want a one-stop venue where they can enjoy great food and even greater desserts. Birthday and special packages are being offered. The Nestlé Creamery is a joint-venture of Nestlé Corporation and Metro Grind. For inquiries on the Nestlé Creamery, please call 415-7872 or 415-4842.



SCIENCE/HEALTH

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Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

Assistant Editor Stella O. Gonzales

New WHO child growth standards out

By Charles E. Buban

IS YOUR CHILD MEASURING up to World Health Organization standards?

The United Nations lead agency for health recently released a new international growth standards for infants and young children (up to 5 years) and for the first time provided evidence and guidance on how every child in the world should grow.

The WHO Child Growth Standards say that children born anywhere in the world and given the optimum start in life have the potential to develop to within the same range of height and weight. It demonstrates that differences in children's growth to age 5 are more influenced by nutrition, feeding practices, environment and healthcare rather than genetics or ethnicity.

Invaluable tool

"These standards will be an invaluable tool for everyone—parents, doctors/healthcare providers, policy makers and other organizations—in detecting undernutrition, overweight/obesity and other growth-related conditions," said Dr. Julius Leclones, executive director of Philippine Children's Medical Center. "With these standards, we can now properly and promptly address these



health conditions at their earliest manifestations."

The first set of these growth charts released late last month includes the usual growth indicators including length/height-for-age, weight-for-age, weight-for-length, and weight-for-height.

For the first time, the WHO included two new standards: a Body Mass Index standard for children as well as a Windows of Achievement standard for six key motor development milestones (sitting without support, standing with assistance, hands and knees crawling, walking with assistance, standing alone and walking alone).

Leclones said the previous standard, in use since the late '70s, was based on data from a limited sample of children from the United States and described on-

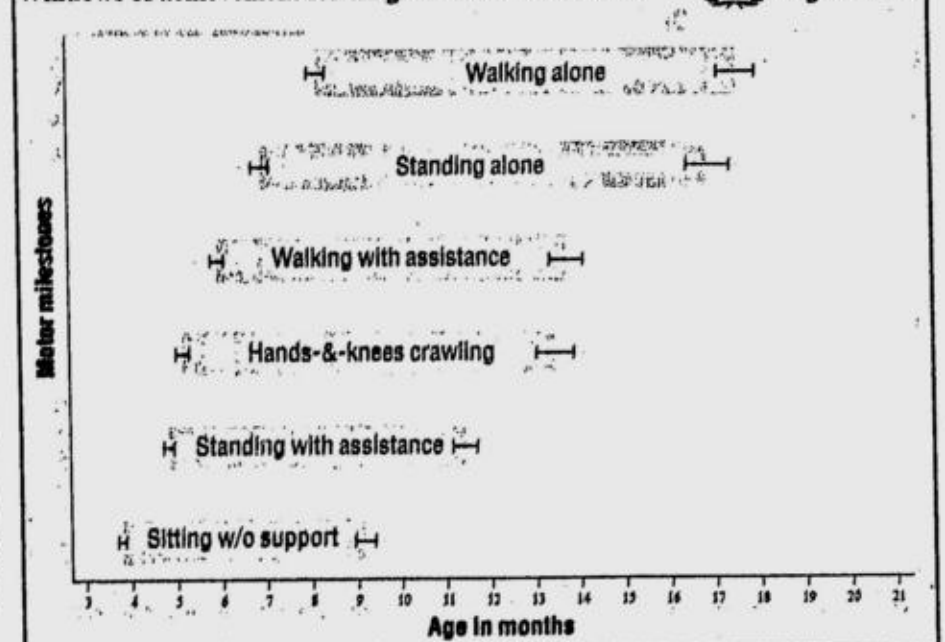
ly how children grow in a particular region and time. It did not provide a sound basis for evaluation against international standards and norms.

"It is expected that with these new standards we will now be provided with a clearer means to assess the well-being of our infants and young children and reduce death and disease in the process," said Leclones.

8,500 kids

The new standards were based on a study (initiated by WHO in 1997) involving 8,500 children who enjoyed an optimal environment for proper growth—recommended infant and young child feeding practices, good healthcare, and other factors associated with good health outcomes like healthy

Windows of achievement for six gross motor milestones



ONE of the new Child Growth Standards released recently by the World Health Organization. SOURCE: WHO

diet and prevention of infection.

The children came from six widely different ethnic backgrounds and cultural settings in Brazil, Ghana, India, Norway, Oman and the US.

The mothers of these children fol-

lowed health practices such as breastfeeding and not smoking during and after pregnancy.

The new standards are posted at the WHO website: www.who.int/child-growth/standards/en/.

Poor nations fail their underfed children—Unicef

WELL OVER HALF OF THE world's undernourished children live in just four nations: India (57 million), Bangladesh (8 million), Pakistan (8 million) and China (7 million), the United Nations Children's Fund said this week.

The Philippines, with three million undernourished children, is one of the countries with the largest numbers. The other countries are Nigeria, Ethiopia and Indonesia, with six million each; the Democratic Republic of Congo, with three million,

and Vietnam, with two million, Unicef said.

Unicef said developing nations should do far more for their undernourished children to meet a long-time UN goal of halving the world's underweight infants by 2015.

Despite steady progress in many poor countries, the pace has lagged in others, threatening to cripple related UN initiatives aimed at controlling disease, boosting education rates and spurring economic growth,

Unicef said.

146M underweight kids

Since 1990, the starting point set by the United Nations, the rate has fallen just 5 percentage points from 32 percent to 27 percent, it said.

The goal is to bring the rate to 16 percent by 2015. Currently there are about 146 million children under 5 who are moderately or severely underweight.

With only nine years left to meet the goal, "this report card

shows clearly that the world must alter its priorities in order to reach the Millennium Development Goal target of reducing child undernutrition by half," Unicef executive director Ann Veneman said.

"But it shows just as clearly that reducing undernutrition is attainable if the lessons of the past 15 years are applied," Veneman said in a foreword to the new report. The millennium goals were set at a UN world summit in New York in 2000.

Inadequate nutrition contributes to an estimated 53 percent of all deaths among infants under 5, and nutritional intervention is most effective when it takes place during the first two years of life, Unicef said.

Among steps it recommended were promoting breastfeeding as the exclusive source of nutrition for the first six months of life, improving the diet of pregnant women to push up birth weights and ensuring adequate supplies of iodized salt, iron, Vi-

tamin A and other vital micronutrients in children's diets.

More than half of the world's underweight children live in South Asia, according to Unicef figures. Another 15 percent are in East Asia and the Pacific, 12 percent in West and Central Africa, 11 percent in Eastern and Southern Africa, 5 percent in the Middle East and North Africa, and 3 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, it said.

Reuters



When other animals get avian flu

EARLIER THIS WEEK JAPAN banned poultry imports from Great Britain to prevent the possible spread of avian H5N1 flu to its domestic birds. The week before, Russia banned the importation of poultry products. In mid-April, Bangladesh had a list of 56 countries from which they would not import poultry, including Great Britain and the Philippines. And approximately one month ago, the European Union decided to extend the ban on poultry product imports from several Eastern European nations.

With so much emphasis on preventing infected birds from possibly spreading the disease to other countries, this is perhaps a good time to note that birds aren't the only animals that can act as carriers for the avian H5N1 flu.

In the past three years, a number of articles have appeared in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases* regarding avian flu and other animals.

For a virus to successfully jump from one species to another, it

DISCOVER

Massie Santos Ballon

needs time to make the transition to the new host and enough genetic similarity between the species so that the virus can actually replicate.

As last week's column noted, while humans and birds share the same avian flu receptors, humans cannot easily transmit the disease to other humans via coughing or sneezing because the virus replicates deep within the human respiratory system.

Cats

The first report of an animal—a leopard—other than a bird being infected with avian flu was documented at a Bangkok zoo in January 2004. After other felines, both wild and domestic, in the area were later found to be

infected with avian flu, researchers began examining the situation more carefully.

It was assumed at the time that the cats were infected by the virus because they ate raw, infected poultry. According to the Oct. 8, 2004 issue of the *Journal of Science*, researchers (Osterhaus et al.) from the Erasmus Medical Center in the Netherlands found that cats could be infected by live chicken, and more worryingly, could transmit the disease to other cats.

In this year's January issue of the *American Journal of Pathology*, Osterhaus et al. further note that the H5N1 virus infection causes systemic disease and spreads by potentially novel routes without and between mammalian hosts.

Pigs

In the August 2005 issue of the *Journal of Virology*, researchers from the United States, Thailand and Vietnam collaborated to study pigs in Vietnam that had been infected with avian flu. Their study showed that while the pigs could

individually be infected with the H5N1 flu strain, they weren't too good at transmitting the disease to each other, and therefore were less likely to be able to transmit the disease to humans.

Recent reports have noted that other animals such as dogs, foxes, weasels and seals have since been found to be infected with avian flu.

People should realize that birds are not the only animals that can be affected by avian flu and that there may be other ways for people to become infected with the virus.

More stringent sanitary measures may be necessary within a household to prevent the possible transmission of avian flu from, say, an infected cat or dog to its human owners. And humans should see to it that their pets aren't exposed to possibly contaminated food in the first place to avoid having their beloved animals bite (and infect) the hands that feed them.

E-mail the author at massie@massie.com.

Singapore vs US math

IN THE 2003 TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL Math and Science Study, Singapore students ranked first in the world, while the US was 16th out of 46 countries, among the lowest in industrialized nations. This trend, though not new, was quite alarming, so US educators decided to learn from Singapore. The American Institutes for Research spearheaded a comparative study on the math frameworks, textbooks, assessments, and teacher preparation in the two countries.

Singapore scored strong in all areas. It uses two frameworks: a highly focused regular framework and an alternative one with similar coverage but done at a slower pace and with more support from expert teachers. The framework is bolstered by good textbooks that develop in-depth understanding of math concepts (compared to US textbooks which rarely go beneath the surface of definitions and formulas).

Singapore's elementary school teachers are required to demonstrate sufficient math skills (better than those of their US peers) even before they start college training to be certified instructors. Each year they undergo 100 hours of continuing training.

Singapore also gives more challenging exams and judges performance based on a value-added approach that rewards schools for individual student progress over time.

Math experts

How has Singapore made all these possible? Over the past decades, the Ministry of Education regularly hired math experts to interview teachers to find out what worked and where their students needed help.

Elementary textbooks usually covered only about a third of the topics in US textbooks (or Philippine ones, for that matter), but the material was taught with more depth. Visual aids were used frequently to make sense of abstract concepts.

In December 2004, the Wall

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua



Street Journal gave an example: "Singapore math texts ask kids to draw bars and other diagrams to visualize problems—a technique called bar modeling. When this strategy is applied consistently over a number of years, children tend to be better able to break down complex problems and do rapid calculations in their head."

Mixed results

Pilot programs based on the Singapore system have been instituted in the US for students in Baltimore and Montgomery County, Maryland, North Middlesex, Massachusetts and Paterson, New Jersey.

Two of the four sites produced significant improvements in student outcomes, but overall there were mixed results due to US teachers who lacked preparation in implementing the new curricula well and high student mobility, which limited the children's prior exposure, especially since the regular Singapore curriculum does not usually repeat content.

However, educators are generally optimistic, and hope to spread the program to more schools. The US system is certainly not inferior in all aspects. Compared to Singapore, the US focuses more on 21st century skills such as representation, reasoning, making connections, communication, and applied math, such as statistics and probability. It's about time we looked to our Asian neighbors for help, rather than rely on traditional Western methods of teaching and learning.

The report can be found in the American Institutes for Research website www.air.org/news/default.aspx.

E-mail the author at bless-book@yahoo.com.

Flu pandemic may be caused by another virus

SINGAPORE—A FLU PANDEMIC may be caused by a virus strain other than the feared H5N1 and political commitment is needed to prepare for an outbreak, a senior World Health Organization (WHO) official said on Thursday.

"I think the issue is not whether there would be a pandemic [but] when the pandemic will occur and how severe the impact will be, and it's also not clear what the virus strain would be," said Jai Narain, director of the WHO's communicable diseases department for Southeast Asia.

"It may not be H5N1. A lot of people feel it may be H5N1, that's why there are a lot of studies going on regarding the virus, but still we cannot be sure," he told an international forum organized by British medical journal *The Lancet*.

133 human deaths

The H5N1 virus has infected millions of birds worldwide and killed 113 people, mostly from Asia. Scientists fear it could mutate into a strain easily passed from person to person, triggering a pandemic like the one in 1918-

1919 which killed an estimated 50 million people worldwide.

Some critics have said that estimates of the possible death toll could be overblown, but Narain said the "potential for a pandemic remains imminent or inevitable."

"The major concern is that if the virus builds up the capacity for human to human transmissions, the impact will indeed be truly catastrophic," Narain said.

Several countries have begun to take the threat seriously and are prepared to implement emergency plans as well as stockpile

Tamiflu, considered the frontline drug against a pandemic.

But much more needs to be done especially in poorer countries where the health infrastructure is weak and the economy depends on the farming sector, Narain said.

"A lot of people speculate that the next pandemic may emerge from Asia itself," he said. "At the same time, in many, many countries we have limited capacities of public health."

There must also be a coordinated approach at the national and international levels, the WHO official said.

AFP

BUSINESS

Subic firms seen getting VAT exemption

Buñag says BIR to issue regulation to ease locators' concerns

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL Revenue is set to issue a revenue regulation exempting businesses located at the Subic Bay Freeport and Special Economic Zone from the value-added tax.

BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag said the BIR needed to issue the regulation to remove con-

fusion over the status of Subic locators in terms of paying VAT.

The move was prompted by the request made by the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority on behalf of its locators, most of which export products.

SBMA Administrator Armand Arreza said that while locators have an understanding that they were indeed exempted from the

VAT, they wanted it spelled out in writing by the BIR.

The confusion came following the implementation of the VAT Reform law, which expanded the coverage of the VAT to previously exempted items starting November last year, and raised its rate from 10 to 12 percent starting February.

The locators were no longer sure if they remained exempted

from the expanded VAT, thus the need for clarification from BIR.

Buñag said, however, that since Subic is a freeport and an economic zone, the fiscal incentives granted by Republic Act No. 7227 applies to locators there.

The law states that locators in economic zones should only pay a 5-percent tax on gross income in lieu of all other taxes.

But the BIR chief said that while locators in Subic were exempted from paying the VAT, they were not allowed to claim refunds for the VAT they shoulder every time they purchase goods or services whose prices already include the 12-percent VAT.

"The amount (of input VAT) should be part of their operating cost," Buñag said.



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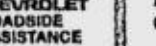
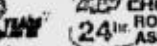
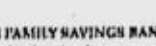


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			12	18	24	36	48	60
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Aveo 1.6 A/T	610,000	69,000	48,166	33,005	25,595	18,214	14,592	12,715
Aveo Special Ed. 1.6 M/T	636,000	79,000	50,392	34,630	26,777	19,056	15,266	13,302
Aveo Special Ed. 1.6 A/T	675,000	79,000	53,062	36,361	28,196	20,056	16,075	14,007
Optra 1.6 L A/T	713,000	89,000	55,556	38,069	29,521	21,009	16,830	14,665
Optra 1.6 LS M/T	738,000	89,000	57,781	39,594	30,704	21,850	17,604	15,253
Optra 1.6 LS A/T	783,000	89,000	61,767	42,339	32,633	23,366	18,718	16,316
Optra Special Ed. 1.6 A/T	795,000	89,000	61,965	42,461	32,927	23,433	18,779	16,357
Optra Wagon 1.6 M/T	808,000	99,000	63,123	43,284	33,642	23,871	19,123	16,683
Optra Wagon 1.6 A/T	851,000	99,000	67,129	46,000	35,671	25,386	20,336	17,720



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Group bucks tariff plan on oil products

By Abigail L. Ho

IMPOSING a higher tariff on refined petroleum products will distort the downstream oil industry as it will favor the local oil refining companies, according to an industry group.

"There will be no level playing field as the law will be unduly favoring a certain sector of the industry," said Glenn Yu, president of the Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association.

A tariff differential will make imported refined petroleum products more expensive compared to similar products produced here by the local oil companies.

Flying V chair and president Ramon Villavicencio had earlier said that an uneven playing field would likely cause smaller players like his company to close shop.

This would place consumers at a disadvantage as they would again be given fewer options, he said.

The first downstream oil industry deregulation law, RA 8180 signed in 1996, imposed a 4-percent tariff differential between crude and finished products.

The high court struck down the law because of that provision.

The current oil deregulation law, RA 8479 signed in 1998, does not mandate any tariff differential, putting refiners and pure finished product importers on equal footing in terms of tariffs.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla had earlier said that the government was willing to explore the possibility of instituting some sort of tariff differential between refiners and pure importers.

However, before doing so, he said a careful study of the legal implications of such a move would have to be done, considering how the Supreme Court reacted when such a provision was included in the first downstream oil deregulation law.

PNOC backs sale of plants

KIDAPAWAN CITY—THE PNOC ENERGY Development Corp. has backed plans to sell geothermal plants in the country to the private sector, saying it would ensure the development of additional energy sources.

PNOC EDC president Paul Aquino said that with the lack of funds facing the government, selling the geothermal plants would bring in some of the money needed to arrest a future "energy crisis."

The Philippines' geothermal plants produce a combined 2,000 megawatts of electricity, but the Department of Energy (DOE) projected that 2,000 MW more could be tapped to address the looming crisis.

Aquino said the government could not develop other sources due to dire lack of funds.

Among the energy sources the government wanted to privatize, he said, were the PNOC geothermal power plants.

But Aquino admitted that the bidding process and exiting laws were hindering the sale of government energy assets to the private sector.

He described the existing law on public bidding as "very transparent, but not very efficient."

Just a week ago, Aquino said the bidding for the coal-fired power plant in Calaca, Batangas did not push through after DMCI Holdings, a local power firm, one of the two bidders, failed to come on time.

Aquino said when the bidding for the second round took place, DMCI's rival, First Gen Luzon Power Corp., failed to match the government's reserve price.

Aquino said they were required to wait another four months before a new bidding process on the Calaca plant could be conducted.

"I don't know how we can successfully do it," Aquino said about the moves to hand over the energy sources to private firms. Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau

PROPERTY

RP's first luxury condo by the sea

By Cesar D. Mangawang

THOSE WHO LOVE the sea will be glad to know that a luxury condominium will soon rise on a seaside cliff within Terrazas de Punta Fuego in Nasugbu, Batangas.

After a year of planning, Landco Pacific Corp. is building not only the country's first luxury condo by the sea but also its first vertical development, Amari en Terrazas, on 1.6 hectares of rolling terrain spanning up to 75 meters above sea level.

According to Jose Antonio Xerex Burgos, Landco Pacific SBU head and vice president of residential resorts, the firm is investing half a billion pe-

sos in the condominium which will have two structures—Casa del Mar and Casa de Amor. Amari is derived from amor, which means love, and mar, the sea.

Construction is expected for completion in two and a half years. Casa de Amor will be finished by the second quarter of 2008 while Casa del Mar will be completed by the fourth

RP'S/B2-2



LANDCO Pacific Corp. combines the sophistication of high urban living and the calm, cool and breezy lifestyle of a resort in the soon to rise Amara en Terrazas in Nasugbu, Batangas.

CONSTRUCTSCOPE

SM City Clark opens May 12

SM CITY CLARK, THE 24TH SM supermall, will bring shopping, leisure and entertainment excitement to this dynamic hub in Central Luzon, when it opens its doors to the public on May 12.

Strategically located at 165,000-square-meter property on M. A. Roxas Avenue in the Clark Special Economic Zone in Angeles City, the 98,256-sq-m two-level mall is SM's second supermall in Pampanga. The first was SM City Pampanga in San Fernando.

With its circular façade and wall cladding in four shades of blue, SM City Clark is an innovation from the traditional SM mall design. It has a grand 16-meter space frame with metal-cladded ceiling in its atrium and two clerestories on the left and right wing. Mallers will also love at fresco dining under a tensile roof in its outdoor fountain area.

For customer convenience, it also has constructed a terminal, as well as an elevated covered walkway with escalators to Bayanihan Park. It also has 2,667 open parking slots.

Shopping fun at SM City begins with the SM Department Store and Hypermarket and SM mainstays like Our Home, SM Appliance Center, ACE Hardware, Watsons and the Surplus Shop, as well as fashion boutiques, home stores, jewelry stores, shoe stores and novelty stores. It will also have computer stores, Internet cafés and telecom stores for the cyber generation.

Pampangueños can get good food at the SM Food Court. The mall will also have six state-of-the-art cinemas with a total of 3,600 seats as well as a large performance and exhibition space.

Creba Social Housing Foundation prexy

ROBERTO A. ALVAREZ JR., A HOUSING AND PROPERTY INDUSTRY AND CIVIC leader, is the new president of the Creba Social Housing Foundation Inc., the social arm of the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders Associations (Creba). Along with CSHFI chair Rosemarie C. Basa, he and other officers as well as board members were recently inducted by lawyer Federico S. Quimbo, president and -CEO of Home Development Mutual Fund (Pag-Ibig Fund) at the Manila Polo Club coinciding with the Creba 4th business monthly meeting.

Alvarez is president of Servequest Inc., president and CEO, RPA Services Corp.; chair, Filmar Realty Corp.; managing director, MMS Land and Property Corp.; director, Smokey Mountain Foundation Inc and Philippine Jaycees Foundation; senator, Junior Chamber International (JCI); former national president and other positions, Philippine Jaycees Inc., and founding president, former treasurer and director, and currently secretary, The Outstanding Young Men Foundation Inc.

Alvarez earned his bachelor of arts major in economics, history and political science from De la Salle University-Manila.

Other CSHFI officers are Delfin J. Wenceslao, vice chair; Manuel H. Torres, executive vice president; Douglas G. Nazareno, VP-internal affairs; Brigid Simon Jr., VP-external and special projects; Avelina P. Acuña, VP-chapters; Anastacio Adriano Jr., VP-finance; Roger M. Garcia Jr., VP-public relations; Teresita C. Millan, treasurer; Porthos P. Almajose, Pablo A. Panillio Jr., Carlos A. Rafinesse and Demetrio L. Posadas, trustees; Julian P. Nacino, corporate secretary; Sammy G. Valencia, immediate past president; and Pedro C. Tario and Techie P. Bautista, advisers.

AddMix in Konstruktura Asya 2006

ADDMIX RECENTLY PARTICIPATED IN THE PRESTIGIOUS KONSTRUKTURA Asya 2006 held at the World Trade Center. Apart from being an exhibitor, Addmix was also a product sponsor and a conference documentation sponsor for the convention.

A key player in the construction industry, AddMix recognizes the importance and magnitude of the regionwide exhibit as it will create more opportunities for local construction companies as well as give them the chance to interact with their foreign counterparts. This event also aims to give local constructors an overview of the rapidly changing and ever growing Western Pacific construction industry.

AddMix has four variants which cater to specific needs in the construction site. These are AddMix Plus, the volume expander for mortars used in filling and laying concrete hollow blocks; AddMix Easy, the plaster mortar enhancer; AddMix Ultra, the fortifier and accelerator for concrete poured in beams, columns and floorings; and AddMix Tilebond, which has triple bonding agents responsible for superior adhesion and faster setting and curing.

Model unit blessing at Cathedral Heights

CATHEDRAL HEIGHTS HOLDINGS INC. RECENTLY HELD THE BLESSING of their model unit at Cathedral Heights Townhouses, an exclusive 90-unit townhouse community in New Manila, Quezon City.

Situated adjacent to St. Luke's Medical School and Medical Center on E. Rodriguez Avenue, Cathedral Heights Townhouses is only a few minutes away from hospitals, schools and commercial establishments.

Cathedral Heights' 1.15-hectare development offers the convenience of a gated community complete with 24-hour security, a spacious pavilion, a horizon-edged pool, children's wading pool and children's play area.

Its Southern Californian architecture is evident in the solid structure and elaborate façade of the townhouses.

Cathedral Heights Townhouses' phase 1, consisting of 52 one- to three-bedroom units, and its Leisure Park, are nearing full completion. More than 50 percent of the units are sold. is indeed an investment worth making.



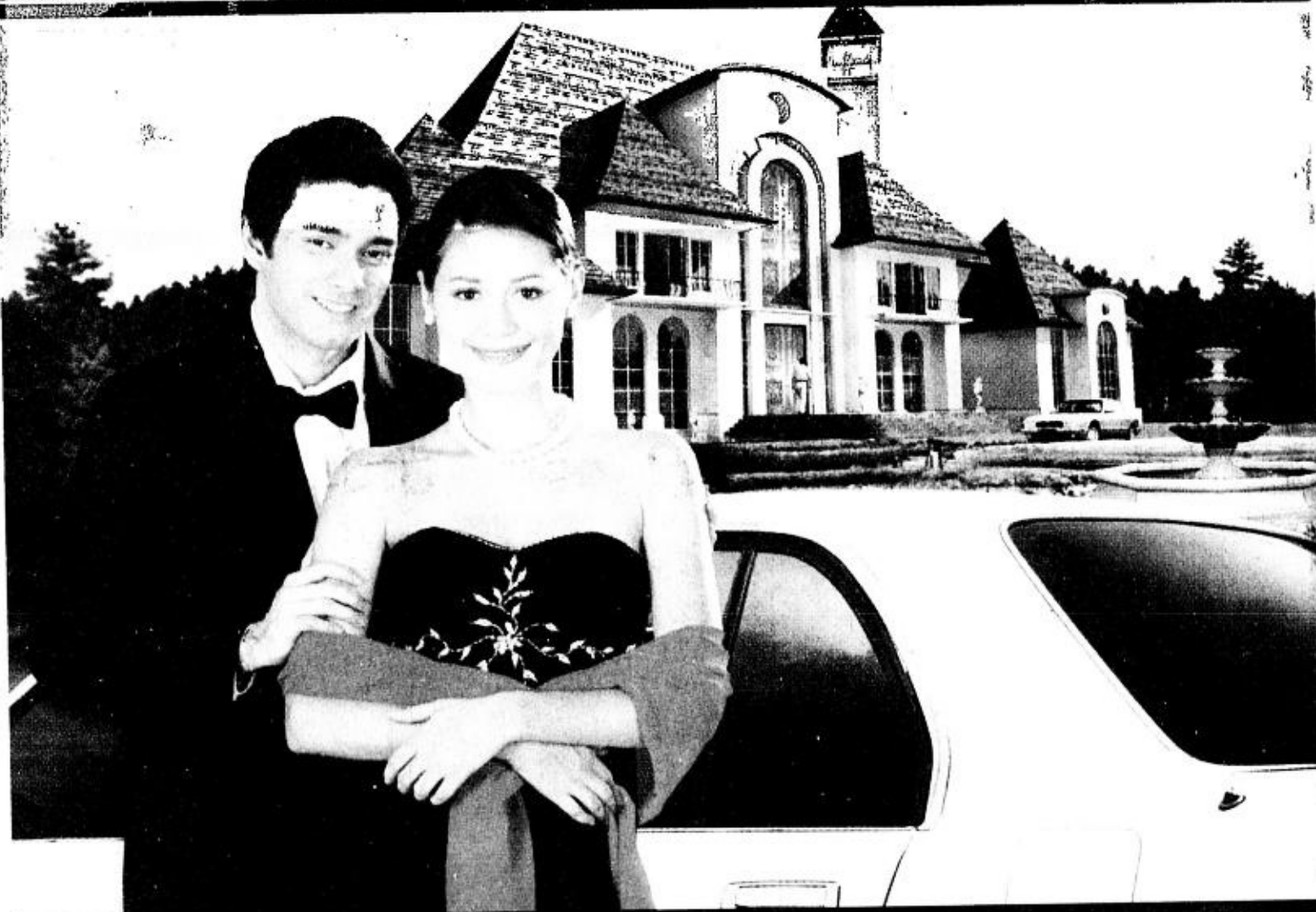
BELAGIO LAUNCH

Belagio Land Inc., a real estate developer and marketing company, was formally launched during a cocktail event aboard the luxury yacht "Princess Regina." It is composed of young successful entrepreneurs (from left) treasurer Marvee Espejo, chair Michael Romero, who also heads the multibillion-peso Manila Harbour Center, and president Frank Evaristo Jr.

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Even before you renovate

WHETHER IT BE FOR LACK OF room, the desire for a new look, or a change in lifestyle, we have our own reasons for renovating our living spaces.

In this information age of Internet and cable TV, so many channels are devoted to promoting architecture and interior design. We see a lot of practical tips and creative ideas that can suit all types of budget. We are suffused with suggestions—from recycling materials straight from the trash bin to where to purchase the most expensive furnishings. Furniture fairs and builders' depots abound. For the unseasoned renovator, the vast array of options could get pretty tricky. Don't let this deluge of information confuse you. First, take time to sit back, think out your plans (and your measuring tools), and decide on the rules of your renovating game.

Clearly define your purpose in renovating. Knowing exactly why you are renovating can make later decisions easy. In a house where both husband and wife (not to mention the kids) may have their own ideas, your options

LIVING ARCHITECTURE



Marcos de Guzman Jr.

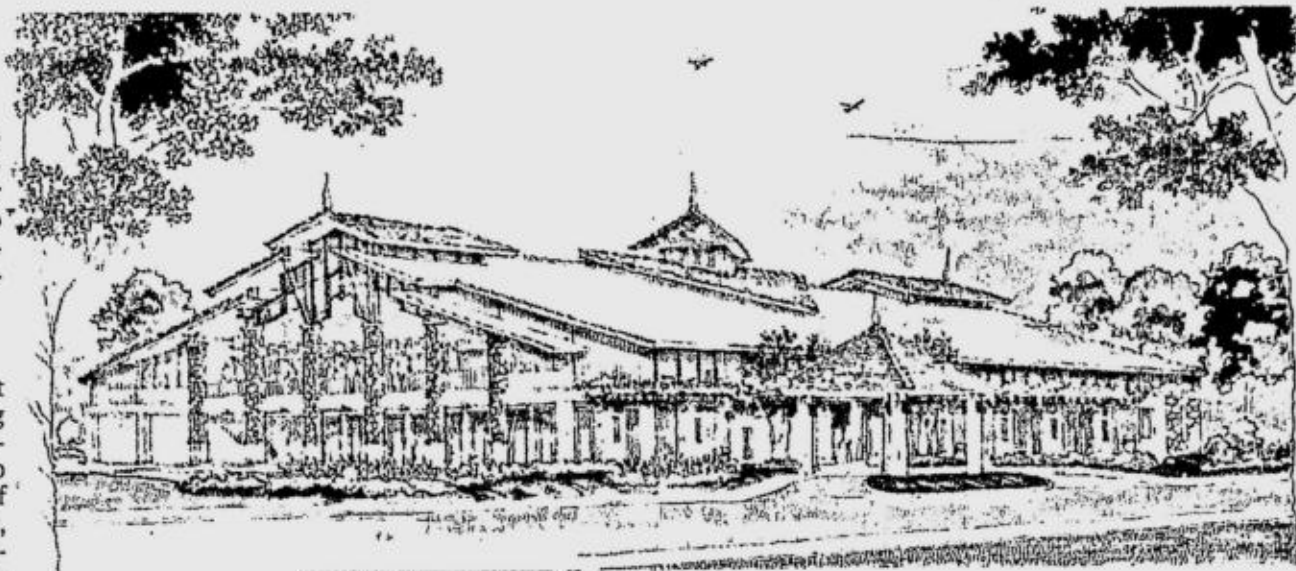
should be narrowed down only to those that point to why you decided to renovate in the first place. For example, if the main intention is to give Junior a separate room, budget-wise, Dad's entertainment cabinet must not take precedence.

Have a theme or a concept

Having a theme and a concept will help create a more interesting and unified look. It must be something that the occupants agree to and must express the interests of the majority. It could be eclectic, modern, minimalist, Asian, country, native, or from whatever age or region the family will be comfortable with. The choices are unlimited but it is a good way to show your family's personality and interest.

Removing is usually better than adding. Oftentimes, the all-important consideration for natural lighting and ventilation takes a back seat because of the need for more living space. Patios or lightwells are closed off because an extension of the kitchen is necessary. If you bought a house in this condition, try to visualize if it might be better to sacrifice some

THIS is the artist's sketch showing the proposed renovation. Instead of cladding it, I recommended opening up the walls to maximize view, lighting and ventilation.



THIS is the sports center of the Taal View Heights which is scheduled for renovation.

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areas to increase your comfort.

One way to create synergism of space is by knocking down unnecessary walls but of course you would need to talk to experts about which walls can be safely torn down. It could be more appealing to combine a small living room and a small dining room into one big living space, with sufficient furnishings to demarcate one function from the other. Removing also pertains to unnecessary clutter, furniture, or accent pieces, which may or may not be replaced with more useful, less cumbersome ones.

When adding, make sure you maintain cross ventilation and natural lighting. We cannot always rely on air-conditioning and lighting fixtures, especially now that power costs continue to soar. It is always a greater advantage to ensure that often used areas in your home are open to air and light. This likewise makes them easier to clean and less prone to odors.

Include the outdoors in your planning. You can either make the outdoors more accessible or visible from within or you can try to bring elements of nature inside your home. This creates more breathing space that will be very useful in the hot and humid months. And it can enable you to enjoy additional room while being shielded from inclement weather.

Sometimes cookie-cutter houses come with windows rather than wide doors not because they are more efficient that way but because the glass doors are more expensive than the windows. You may choose to open up these windows to make use of the outdoors as additional living spaces. It's not just functional, it's healthier too.

Economical ways

Painting and adding colors are economical ways of beautifying your home with great impact. Before you even begin, invest in a painting guide. Likewise, there are so many decorating books for you to follow and they are worth the investment. Even just adding one colorful, tasteful, decorative piece can spice up a monochromatic corner.

When consulting experts to help you, give them a detailed list of what you need or want on the outset. The renovation task is so exacting that any delayed additional requirements from you may require replanning and a waste of valuable time and money.

The builders must be certain of exactly what you want in order to put your vision into reality. Both of you must have the same picture of the final product. Prepare photos or pictures of particular elements that may be unique or hard to explain. However, you must also listen to their advice as to how feasible your ideas are in the "real world."

Lastly, have fun planning and doing the renovation. Get involved and get the family involved. They should have a say in things, albeit yours must be the deciding vote. At the age of 8, my kids knew precisely what they wanted—from the style of their beds to the design of the wallpaper. They wanted nothing less in their rooms and were free to express their individuality there.

Giving sufficient leeway encourages the family to participate in the project and ultimately appreciate the results. In the end, all of you can enjoy living and sharing your freshly renovated place.

RP's first luxury . . .

From page B2-1

quarter of the same year.

To be sold exclusively to Club Punta Fuego members are 95 condo units with unique and unobstructed views of the South China Sea. There will be 25 units at the three-story Casa de Amor while seven-story Casa del Mar will have 70 units.

Prices of the condo units range from P8 to 12 million for Club Punta Fuego members.

Asian-European design

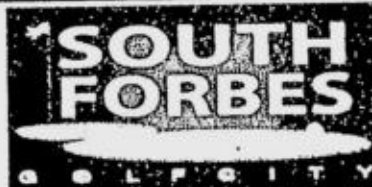
The central design theme of Amara en Terrazas is a fusion of Asian and Western architecture. Inspired by Spanish-Mediterranean design elements, the developer will blend old world elegance with Asian elements.

The natural setting will be maximized by the developer through trellised bridges, water features and tropical landscaping. This means large windows, balconies and extended eaves.

Architect Christina Guico of inhouse design group said the condo units will be laid out in such a way that sliding or folding doors will separate the living room from the sleeping quarters. Designed as an open suite, each unit will have a large amount of space when the panels are folded during the day. To ensure privacy at night, the panels can be shut once more.

Amari is indeed for people who love the sea and who love to dwell near it.

SOUTH FORBES: Right at the Heart of the New University Belt



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Are you looking for a community in the serene South that's near top schools and universities?

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At one end of South Forbes is the exclusive school of St. Scholastica's College. Don Bosco and De La Salle University-Cantubang are just a few minutes away. The new campus of University of Sto. Tomas will take a short ride. Ateneo holds graduate school classes at nearby Paseo De Sta. Rosa.



De La Salle University is beside South Forbes.

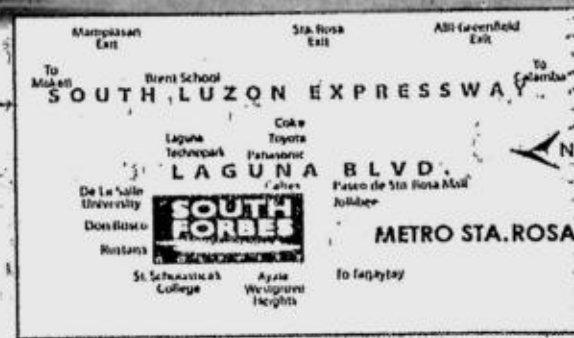
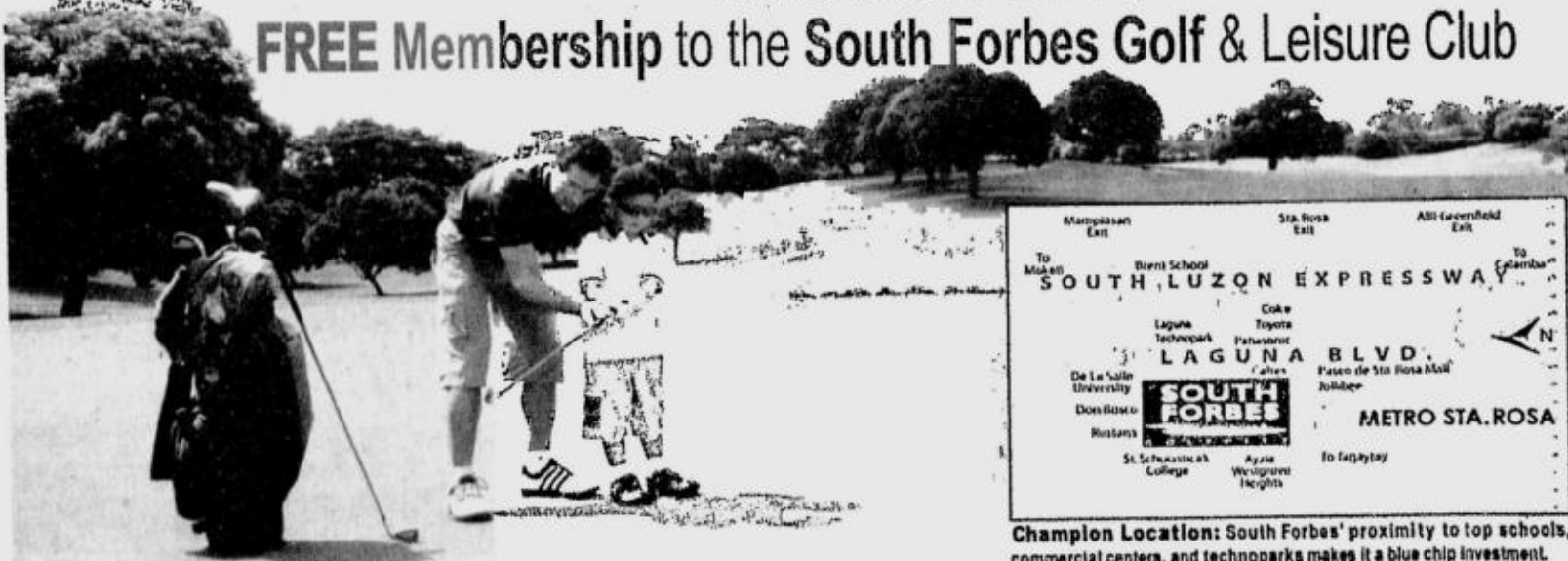
Over at the next exit, at Mampisan, is Brent International School. As for toddlers, South Forbes's very own pre-school, Learning Links Academy of Sta. Rosa, is ideal.

There's more! University of Asia & the Pacific and Xavier School will be opening their campuses soon.

Once you reside in South Forbes, your kids will be very near school. Plus, they won't get to experience the hassles of Metro traffic. As such, your whole family can spend more quality time together.

Let them take swimming lessons at the Main Clubhouse. Walk down the nearest landscaped park. Host relatives and friends to a dinner at the South Forbes City Center. Best of all, with his free South Forbes golf membership, dad can even teach the kids how to play golf!

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SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2006



FEDERAL Land boasts another efficient development: Mactan Tower has been recently completed until the podium level, showing that the project's construction is ahead of schedule.

Luxurious resort-inspired living on the rise in RP

FEDERAL LAND INC., ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S leading property developers, has added to its list of upscale developments another masterpiece with Mactan Tower, Phase 3 of Bay Garden—an upscale condominium development offering resort living at the heart of the city. Construction of Mactan Tower is in full swing and is expected for turnover within 2007.

Federal Land has remained consistent with its impressive record for efficient development, with the construction of Mactan Tower weeks ahead of schedule. Just five months after its first concrete pouring in 2005, the tower had been efficiently completed until the podium level. Work has now begun on the Residential tower, with an expected topping-off in August.

Consistent adherence

Backed by 33 years of experience, Federal Land has solidified its place in the real estate industry through a consistent adherence to high-quality standards of land development and timely delivery of structures.

Bay Garden is situated within Metropolitan Park, an emerging master-planned community on Roxas Boulevard, right beside Manila Bay. The completed Anchor Bay, Boardwalk Bay and Crystal Bay towers offer residents convenient city living amid a sprawling natural environment, with 60 percent of the 40-hectare community dedicated to greenery and open space.

The rising Mactan Tower provides the same tranquility and comfort of idyllic living. This time, the luxurious atmosphere is further enhanced by facilities reminiscent of a first-class resort. The completed project would have units with sizes that range from 41 to 68 sq m for the charming one-bedroom units, from 66 to 116.5 sq m for spacious two-bedroom units and from 93 to 192.5 sq

m for generous three-bedroom units.

Each unit features trendy modern design and careful space planning that cater to the distinct tastes of discerning homebuyers. Splendid floor-to-ceiling wall windows provide residents with breathtaking sights. Residents are treated to a view of the famous Manila Bay in the west, and the resort-style pool garden or Makati skyscrapers in the east.

Services, facilities

Federal Land made sure of the inclusion of the modern services for Mactan Tower residents. All units come with a parking space, plus provision for cable TV and telephone lines. The fire safety system and standby power generator prevent dangers and other inconveniences during emergency situations.

True to its promise of an everyday vacation, the whole family will enjoy hours of unwinding in upscale facilities offered by Mactan Tower. The overall well-being of the residents was the primary consideration in the meticulous planning of this high-rise abode. The podium area features a free-form outdoor swimming pool, children's wading pool, outdoor playground, 12 poolside gazebos and a steam room.

The 385-sq-m lush mini putting green is available for golf enthusiasts who want to practice their swing. Food aficionados can look forward to having grill parties and picnics at the outdoor barbecue area. The outdoor activity center serves as the perfect venue for intimate gatherings whereas the prestigious function room is available for bigger and more exclusive events.

Mactan Tower offers best of both worlds: the private, luxurious ambience of a resort paradise and the exciting convenient lifestyle offered by the urban setting. For inquiries about Bay Garden Mactan Tower, call 551-0888 or log on to www.baygarden.com.ph.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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B2-3



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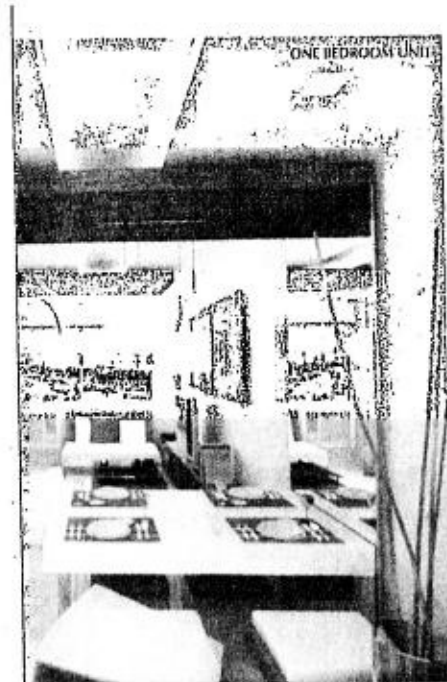
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THE CHAMBORD takes its inspiration from the loveliest and grandest of the Renaissance buildings in France's Valley of Loire—Chateau de Chambord.

of the mouth with a grace that gives visions of an abode fit for queens and princesses. It is more than a mansion, it is a palace, and South Forbes is bringing the atmosphere of France to the country with the launch of South Forbes Golf City's newest project, Châteaux de Paris.

Chambord, the first of the model chateaus, takes its inspiration from the loveliest and grandest of the Renaissance buildings in France's Valley of Loire—Chateau de Chambord. This sumptuous palace was inspired by the great Leonardo da Vinci, who was said to have added his own embellishments to the chateau's façade and interiors.

Modern interpretation

South Forbes' Chambord brings this treasure to the 21st century. The classical rendition of the South Forbes French chateau moves away from the heavy-handed baroque decorations. The result is a modern interpretation of the classics that still has strong ties to tradition and style. It brings sophistication and gracious living of the French Renaissance refined to today's more subtle and restrained tastes.

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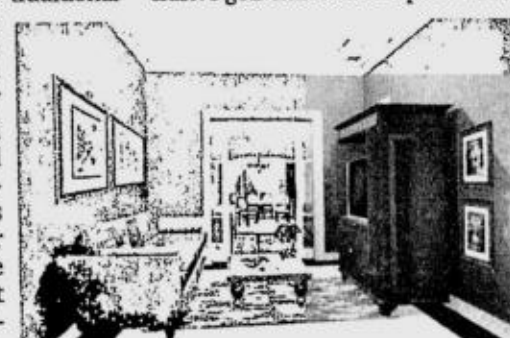
tional feel while still keeping the home in the 21st century.

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style . urban living .

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the Chase

Super! bodies
of the new
Century
page C2

Fiery denim
for the Super!
generation page E4

Oops!
Super! page E7
did it again

Super! page D1
**scratch
and sniff**

Photography: XANDER ANGELES
Styling: MILLET ARZAGA
Sittings editor: DAVID MILAN
Makeup: LALA FLORES using
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US HEALTHY GIRLS. Angel Aquino, chief judge



SEDUCE ME. runner-up Elaine Gallardo loves Century Tuna



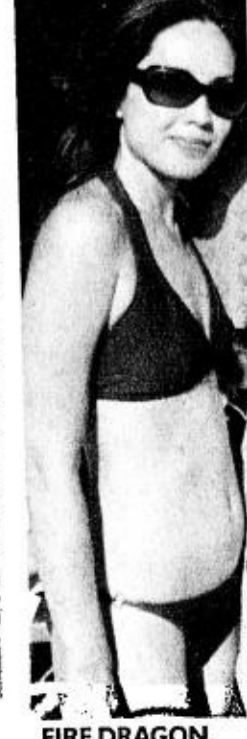
PINK PANTHER. Superbods host Bianca Valerio



SUPER! MODEL. Super! columnist. Raya Mananquil



BUZZ OF THE CENTURY. Phoemela Baranda is Super! hot



FIRE DRAGON. Teresa Herrera



PRINCE CENTURY WITH CINDERELLA. Century Tuna's Leo Po with girlfriend Mariel Santos at Pier One in Boracay

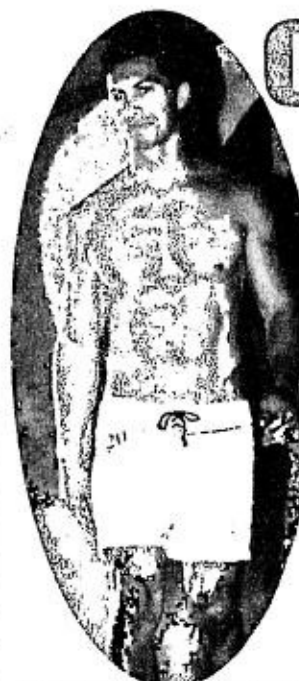


COUPLE OF THE CENTURY. Richard and Lucy Gomez at the White and Lite party



DELICIOUSLY LITE. Superbods runner-up Danielle Pioli

Super! bod all in the n of the Su



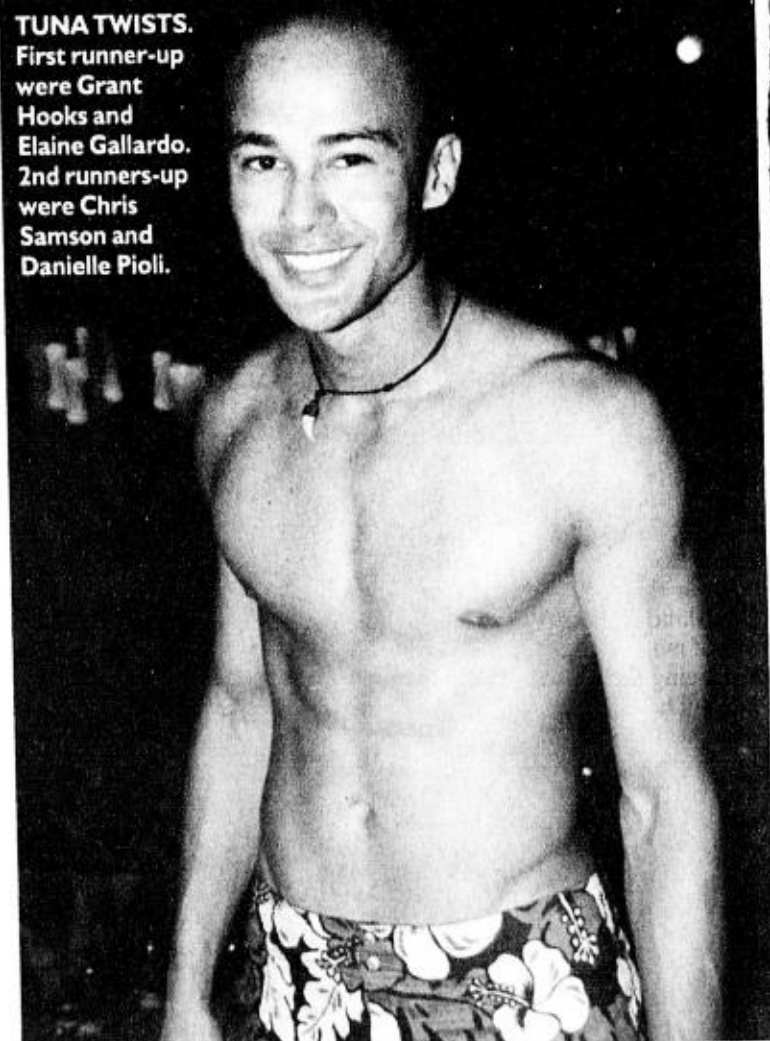
BODY LANGUAGE. finalist G-ford Lara

AT THE CORE OF SUMMER's hottest body fest that had abs of steel, killer smiles and toned muscles is a sense of zest to live the healthy life and flaunt all that you've got.

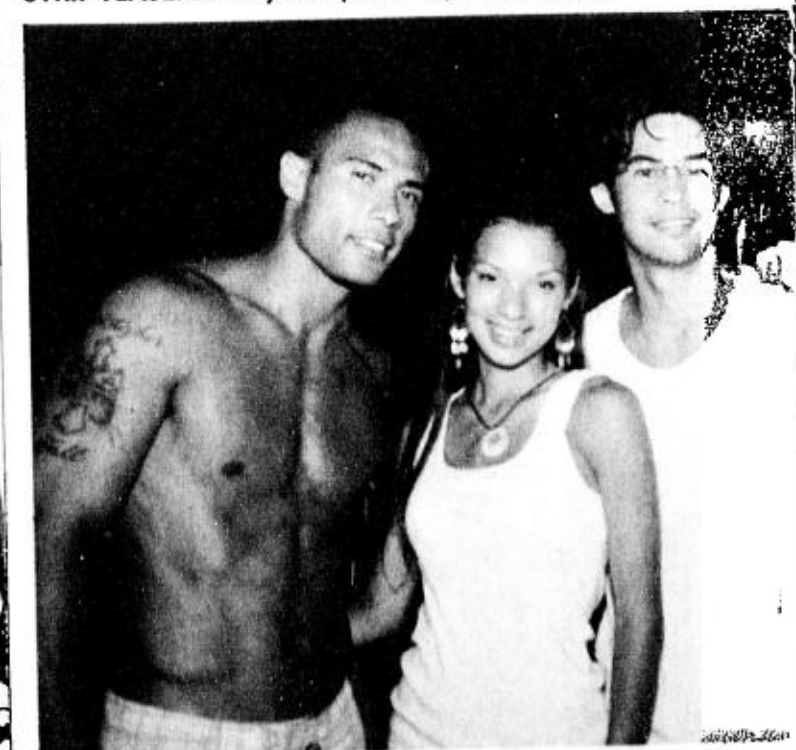
When you know you're flying to Bora, all you could think of is hitting the gym to add those extra crunches, to make sure the right veins pop out. But wait—it takes more than those extra hours at Gold's to achieve the perfect bod. When you indulge during the daytime and give in even further at night, the right dose of discipline is needed to achieve that Super! bod.

To disseminate that Super! message, Century Tuna, a.k.a the Super! meat,

TUNA TWISTS. First runner-up were Grant Hooks and Elaine Gallardo. 2nd runners-up were Chris Samson and Danielle Pioli.



STRIP TEASE. Century Tuna poster boy Will Devaughn



FIT AND FAB POSSE. Siblings John and Amy Hall, Paolo Paraiso and G

Mas makulay, mas masaya!



This summer, Color Your Life with Magnolia Chocolait and you can win a Sony PSP, a Nokia N-Gage, a smart A.I. on the beach, and more! Just buy specially marked one (1) liter Magnolia Chocolait and creatively color the attached Color Your Life! Chocolait coloring material. Use any coloring medium, any coloring style!

You can also join Color Your Life summer events and enjoy free carnival rides, magic, fortune telling, fun art activities, face painting, henna tattooing, and so much more. Because life is so much better in color!

Color Your Life summer events:
April 16 - Easter celebration at Enchanted Kingdom, Sta. Rosa, Laguna
April 22 - Thruzone, Glorietta
April 29 - Thruzone, Alabang Town Center
May 6 - 8 Waves, Bulacan
May 13 - Enchanted Kingdom, Sta. Rosa, Laguna
May 20 - Picnic Forest, Festival Mall
May 27 - G-Box, Robinson's Place, Manila

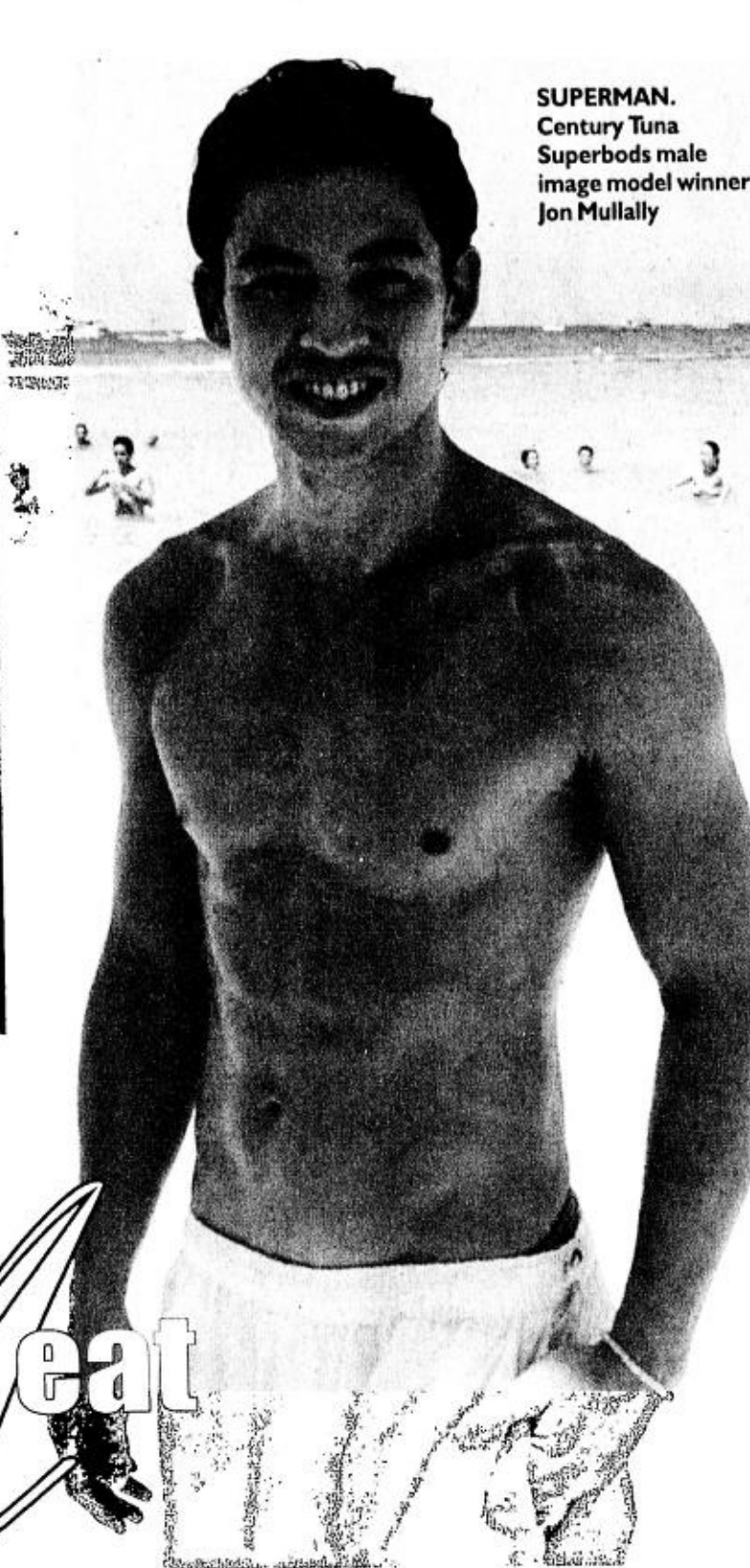
Promo period from
April 16 to June 3, 2006
Please see complete details
at the back of
Magnolia Chocolait 1 liter packs



SHE'S GOT IT!
Century Tuna
Superbods female
image model winner
Michelle Padua



SUPERMAN.
Century Tuna
Superbods male
image model winner
Jon Mullally



PRAISES FOR PADUA.
Michelle on the ramp



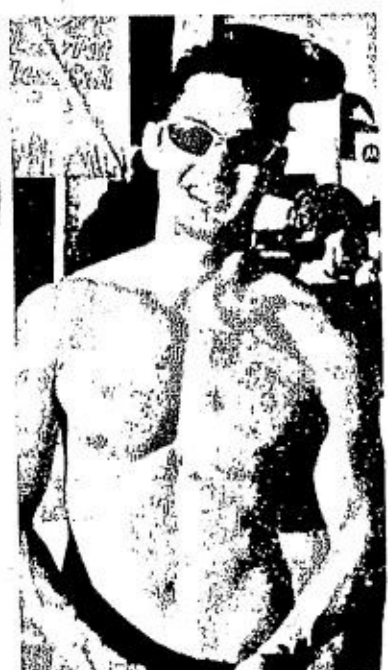
GREEN EYED HUNK. 2nd
runner-up Chris Samson



SEXY MATE! Superbods finalist;
Lani Pillinger was a crowd favorite

dies
ame
ner!

eat



ABS UNLIMITED. Marc Nelson



VISUAL PEG. Victor Consunji



BRAZILIAN MAX. Superbods
finalist Edward Fagundes

Tim Yap



threw a Super! party to look for those Super! peeps who will embody their vision of Super!-hood. (Count the Super!s in that sentence.) There were 2001 things happening on the island last weekend, but all the Super! ones gravitated towards Pier One, where all the activities for Century Tuna's search were held.

Celebrity teams battled with the newly-screened contestants during earlier parts of the day that was kickstarted by yoga and boxing—a healthy way to jumpstart your day. Don't forget the tuna, of course. Somebody was ecstatic because Century now has a meat loaf variant, but that's another story.

Judging the Super! bods

I must confess at this point to being a Century Tuna junkie. I like it spicy, and I love it Bicol Expressed. Century top guy Leo Po once sent me Century Tuna Lite and I had it every day, the protein in my body inspiring me further to pump not just iron, but to be vigorous in my day's activities.

As we speak, I am still high from last weekend's events. How can I not be? I was also a judge at the Super! search where all of the island's hottest bodies paraded in front of me, all vying for the coveted title of being Century Tuna's new ambassadors of health and wealth. Wealth, because the winning guy and gal brought home giant checks worth half a million each! (Plus a one year modeling contract with Century Tuna to appear all over!) "That's big!" commented my fellow judge and "eat-your-tofu" believer and Super! columnist Raya Manaquil said when we were briefed by A-list advertising maverick Ariel Comia right before the all-meat (pun not intended) fest.

"Black is in!" "I am a badminton...freak!" After these and other introductions that further enriched pageant hilarity history, the final few were chosen and grilled by the judges, a motley crew of health and fitness advocates chaired by Angel Aquino. JM Rodriguez and Bianca Valerio traded one witty whack after another, expertly hosting the show.

At night's peak, two names were announced by Angel and Century Tuna's marketing maven Ayeth Evangelista. Fil-Brit Jon Mullally and Fil-Am Michelle Padua were both unanimously picked for their well rounded-ness in body, mind and personality. These days, it is a given that we should all look good, feel good and be good. (The last part I always fail at.) But these two shone oh-so-brightly—a glow that stems from living a lifestyle that represents the cliché but true "health is wealth" adage.

Oh yes, they are so Super!



SUPER! DUO. Century Tuna
Superbods image model winners Jon
Mullally and Michelle Padua



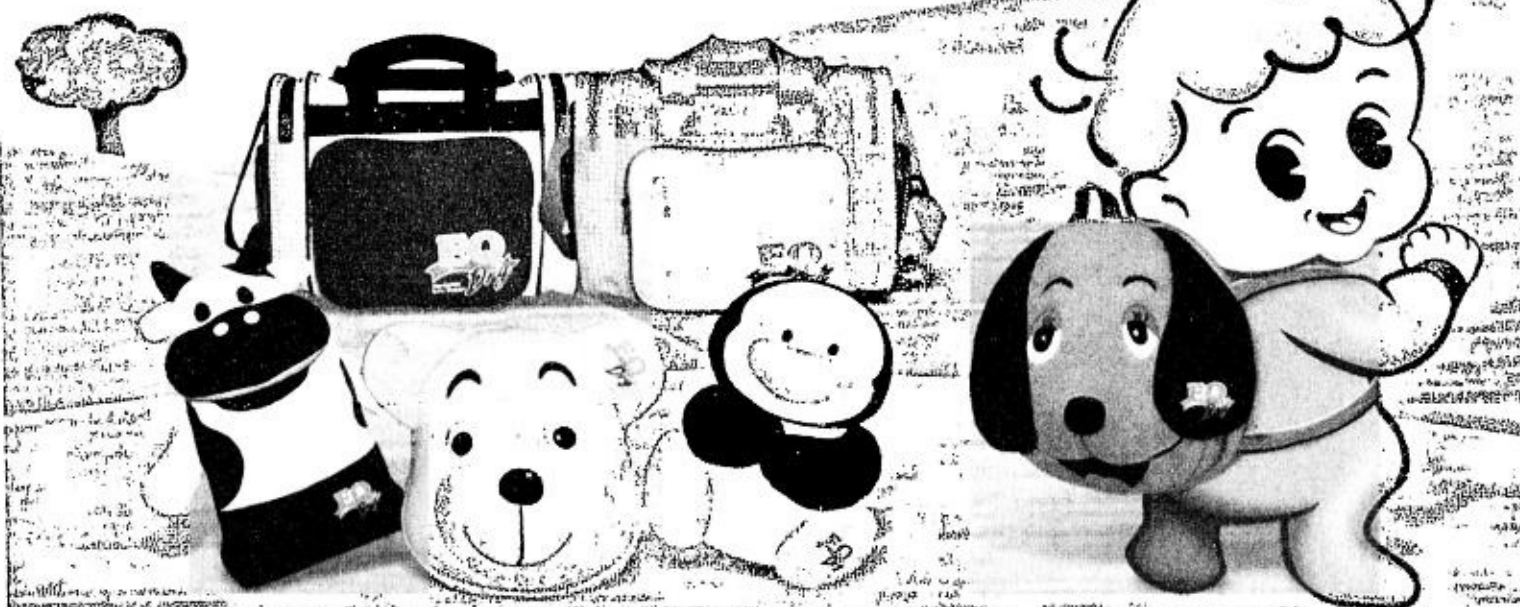
JM Rodriguez



CENTURY COVER GIRLS. Vanna Garcia and
Vina Morales at Pier One

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MECHANICS:

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Jumbo Pack (S80s, M54s, L48s, XL42s)	3 points

II. Submit the required EQ Dry Baby Diaper wrappers together with the following information: sender's name, complete address where you want the premium item/s delivered, baby's name and age, telephone and/or cellphone numbers, signature of parent/guardian, and the desired premium item, written on a piece of paper and enclosed in an envelope. For hard-to-find locations, it would be best that landmark information of the address given be provided for easy reference.

III. Entries can be mailed or hand carried to:
"EQ Dry Travel Buddies" OR "EQ Dry Travel Buddies"
JS Unitrade Merchandise, Inc. P.O. Box 14280 Pasig City
31st Floor, Raffles Corporate Center
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IV. Choose from any of the following collection baby bag designs with the required EQ Dry Baby Diaper label points:

Premium Items	Points
Baby Travel Bags: (available designs) A. Pink and blue color combination B. Green and yellow color combination	10 points each
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IMPORTANT:

- Only packs of EQ Dry with cloth-like cover (plain or white) will be accepted.
- Entries containing cut-out points will not be honored.

V. The chosen premium item/s shall be delivered by LIBCAP Express to the address submitted by the consumer. In the event that the entry sender is not present during the time of delivery, a member of the sender's household may be asked to sign a proof of delivery and receive the premium item/s in behalf of the entry sender.

VI. Delivery lead times for the premium items are as follows (commencing upon receipt of "delivery orders" by the courier):

- a. Metro Manila: within 2 to 3 days
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- c. Mindanao: within 3 to 5 days

VII. Premium items will be delivered until 60 days from end of promo period.

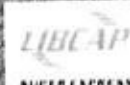
VIII. Consumers may join as many times as they want.

IX. Prizes are non-convertible to cash.

X. Entries thru mail are qualified 15 days after the promo period.

For more information, please visit www.jsunitrade.com

Happy si Baby, Happy si Mommy!



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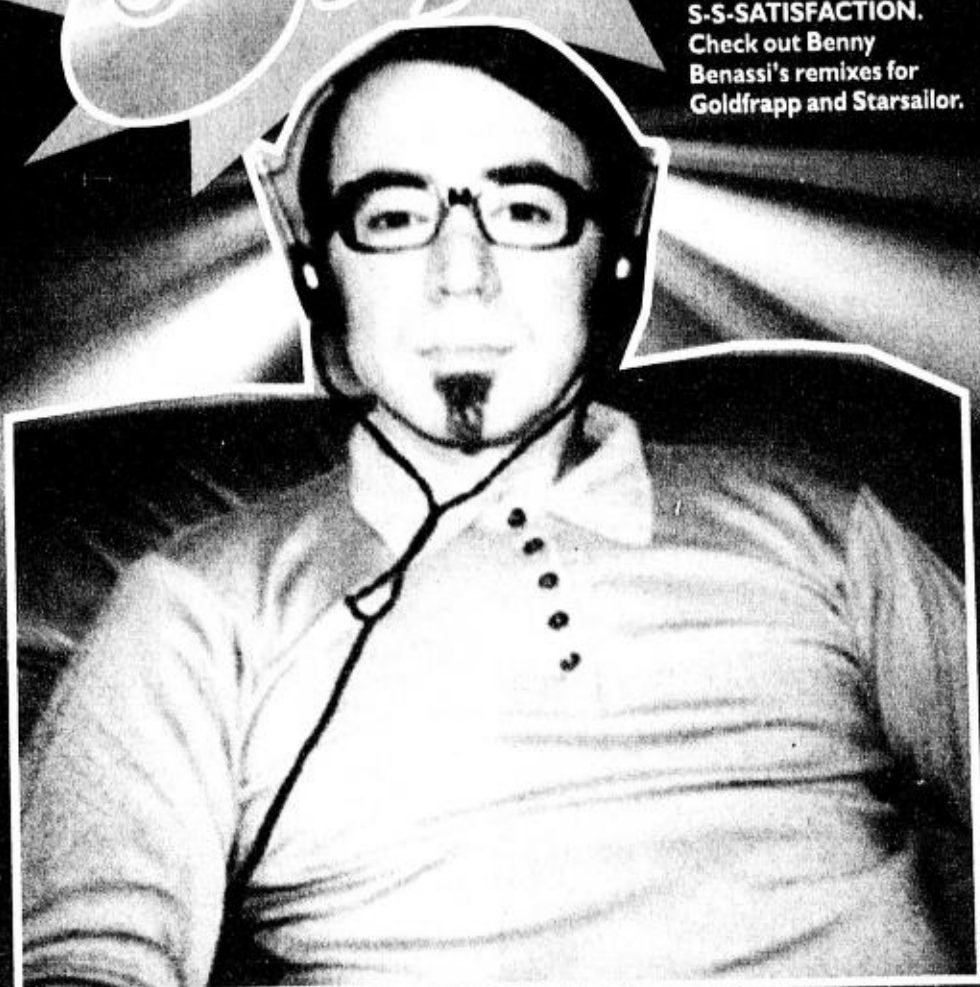
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I just wanna rock, DJ

LIKE MUSICAL MONTAGUES AND Capulets, there was a time back in the day when punk and dance weren't allowed to eyeball—much less lap-dance—each other. And really, that was a no-brainer, since no one from the rock world seemed to give a donkey turd about what was going on in the underground dance scene—and vice-versa—anyway.

Until the early '90s, that is, when our well-intentioned forebears majorly messed up the rock/dance experiment with a band called Happy Mondays. If Leo and Claire's star-crossed romance ended in a teenage body count, that audacious hybrid also met a gnarly, gnarly death.

Then sometime two or three years ago, the visceral thrill of '80s tension subgenres like electro, electro-clash, and synth-rock locked itself up in a disco, surfacing the morning after—fabulously disoriented and hung over—as the freaked-out feat of sound called indie dance. Many Wikipedia geeks would blog in protest, but The Rapture's "House of Jealous Lovers" eloquently crystallized that spirit.

But now that even middle American tourists are hopping off the Brooklyn-bound I train to "party" in Bedford, the genre—and the culture inextricably linked with it—has fallen from hipster grace. Outside the elitist music bubble, however, dance-punk is still fairly significant; it just needs to shuffle around and become new-ish once again. Cue the dance-punk house remix!

Dead Kandi?

As a worldwide movement, dance music itself has also been forced to work in exile. There was a time when kids lined up to venerate superstar DJs. But today, you'd be forgiven for thinking that clubbing was tired and meaningless and everyone with it and/or under 30 listened to messy guitar-based rock, the Zeitgeist of the second.

Since everyone feels special and famous in his or her own way, idol worship is now passé. Why line up to hear a DJ when you can be one yourself? This DIY ethos, the hallmark of our peer-to-peer-loving generation, has spawned nontraditional clubbing experiences—one either brings his or her own music to the club (normally in iPod form) or runs his or her own nights exclusively for buddies.

This backroom-of-a-club vibe appeals to a broader, more eclectic demographic, as proven by the success of somewhat clandestine parties thrown by MisShapes in the West Village, NYC and Fluxx and Panic in Manila. Though the two scenes are on opposite sides of the water, they run parallel to each other. They both want to take dance back to its early days and rescue it from the anodyne ring tone it has become.

New rock 'n roll rulebook

To push buttons on the floor once again, several dance music dudes have taken a page from the rock 'n roll rulebook. If disco-punk meshed the pleasures of early dance culture with the almost puritanical stance of punk, remixed disco-punk/dance-rock moves the goalposts even further.

"I'm gonna rip it off/And that ain't what you wanna hear/But that's what I'll do." So goes the opening line of Adam Freeland's dance-based remix of the White Stripes' classic "Seven Nation Army." In less-accomplished hands, combining the traditional chords,

*Age against
the machine*

Gino de la Paz



Just when you thought dance-rock was dead, it gets re-re-remixed

NEW JACQUES CITY.
In-demand producer
Stuart Price aka
Jacques Lu Cont

head-nodding, and choreography of rock with house music bpm's may sound like a boozy brawl. But make no mistake, Freeland knows the craft; his club-friendly bootleg versions of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and The Doors' "Hello I Love You" are strangely familiar shout-outs to the dance, punk, and dance-punk genres.

Another beatmaster to beat is Jacques Lu Cont, a.k.a. Stuart Price. Registering first on the radar as Les Rhythmes Digitales, he really got the tongues of the gig-going community wagging with his expert riff-based remixes of The Killers' "Mr. Brightside" and Coldplay's "Talk." (By the way, the house remix of The Killers' "Somebody Told Me" you may have heard at Embassy at 5 in the morning is by Josh Harris.)

Creating even more dance-rock dystopia is DJ Benny Benassi. If you think his extended remix of "Ooh La La" by Goldfrapp is ace, wait till you download his groovy mash-up of Starsailor's "Four To The Floor" and The Mamas and The Papas' "California Dreaming." For the oldies, Deep Dish has also done the nasty to Fleetwood Mac's Stevie Nicks, resulting in the brilliant and virally popular "Dreams 2005."

Remixing the chaos

If the last five years of the '90s were dedicated to rave culture and the first five years of this decade were all about indie rock, my own crystal ball says the closing years of the Zeroes will see the two merging—and reemerging—as free-to-let-loose remixes with built-in niche fans. That may conjure an image of an all-out soundclash, but the rivalry seems to have declined for now.

2005 namechecked groups like LCD Soundsystem, Hard Fi, Bloc Party, Interpol, Franz Ferdinand, and The Futureheads as the purveyors of cardinal cool. Somewhere in the world of extra content known as Limewire, however, new house versions of those bands' recent hits are mixing into the chaos as we speak.

Whether or not they're simply ever-resourceful regurgitations of past glories, remixed dance-punk or dance-punk-house, the terminology isn't carved in stone yet out-classes anything out there at present. What should you do then if you're an ardent new-generation music fan? I suggest staking out the least raucous corner you can find. Because although now is not a great time to be a purist, it's still an awesome moment to let the guitars weep, hear the DJ get wicked, and dance your ass off.

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Tales of the (red) Tape

FOR SOME REASON, THIS MONTH HAS BEEN designed by my personal architect of karma to endure several levels of human suffering in our beloved bureau-crass-y. Behold, ladies and germs, three true-to-life horror tales of red tape!

NBI Files and the revenge of the Angry Fingerprinting Man

Under the scorching midday sun, a long line snaked around a dusty concrete street. This is the queue for the NBI clearance, which one needs for employment or travel abroad, to certify that one is a law-abiding citizen without a criminal record. In this particular satellite office of the NBI south of the metropolis, a yellow sign posted on the bathroom in particular piqued my attention. It read, (and I apologize early for this statement of fact):

"Ihi—P2"

OUT THE WINDOW

Tals Diaz

"Dumi—P5"

So apparently, in these hallowed offices, your sh*t commands a higher value. A postscript under the reasonable price list explained that the fees are needed to maintain the bathroom's cleanliness. Moving along on the subject of human waste, there were more signs pasted everywhere to direct the

clueless applicant in his quest. Translated roughly from Tagalog, the signs read:

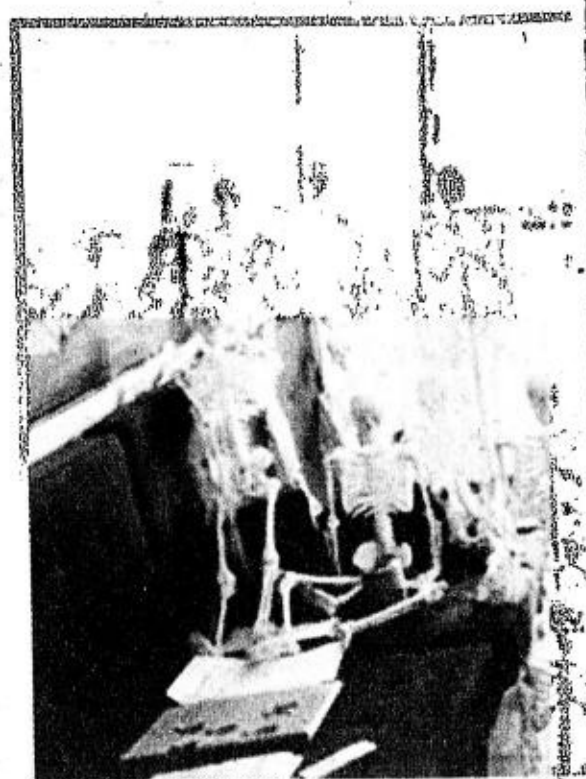
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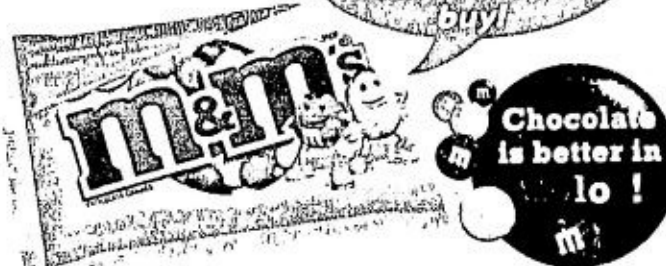
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Tales of the (red) Tape

FOR SOME REASON, THIS MONTH HAS BEEN designed by my personal architect of karma to endure several levels of human suffering in our beloved bureau-crass-y. Behold, ladies and germs, three true-to-life horror tales of red tape!

NBI Files and the revenge of the Angry Fingerprinting Man

Under the scorching midday sun, a long line snaked around a dusty concrete street. This is the queue for the NBI clearance, which one needs for employment or travel abroad, to certify that one is a law-abiding citizen without a criminal record. In this particular satellite office of the NBI south of the metropolis, a yellow sign posted on the bathroom in particular piqued my attention. It read, (and I apologize early for this statement of fact):

"Ihi—P2"

OUT THE WINDOW

Tals Diaz

"Dumi—P5"

So apparently, in these hallowed offices, your sh*t commands a higher value. A postscript under the reasonable price list explained that the fees are needed to maintain the bathroom's cleanliness. Moving along on the subject of human waste, there were more signs pasted everywhere to direct the

clueless applicant in his quest. Translated roughly from Tagalog, the signs read:

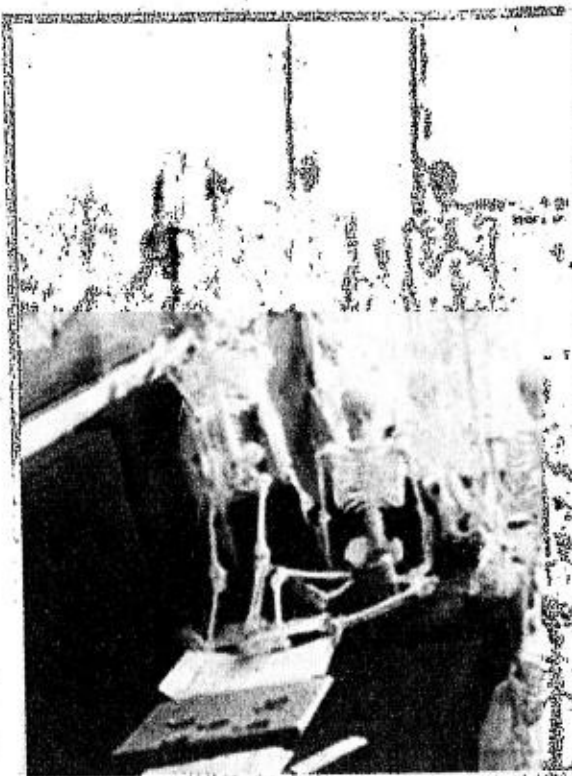
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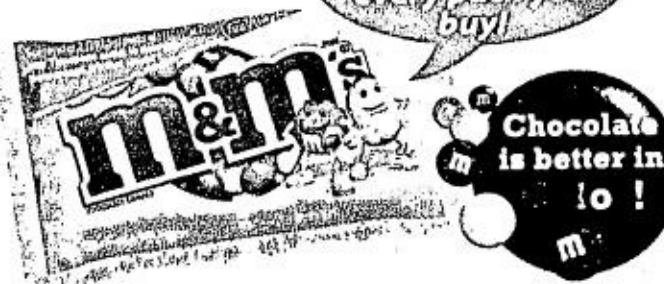
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The day began at the crack of dawn where I made my way to this stark, whitewashed office, reminiscent of a mental ward. A blasé, robotic guard in the front desk issued me a number, handwritten in one of 3 colored slips of paper. I fell in line, and thus, my mental degeneration began.

Little by little, they started to appear through the elevator doors, the account execs from various ad agencies, all of whom should be canonized for their unfathomable patience. Each and every person who comes here is an epitome of ennui, resigned to their fate—death by waiting.

Mind you, one can't even leave the line for a while because sometimes your number is called randomly and if you aren't around, you fall back in line. While waiting, you end up making friends, who fill you in on the latest agency gossip. To pass the time, the poor souls resort to various activities in the feeble attempt to keep their sanity. There's the always reliable cell phone, which at least provides temporary entertainment in the form of games, photography, videography and text messaging. Bible-thick novels are devoured in this space of time. The most maddening endeavor of all is watching the digital clock glaring at you and chronicling your wasted day, minute by minute. (As I write this, it has turned 4:01 p.m.—I had been here since 7 a.m.)

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Behind the counter, to the far end of the wall, was a decrepit old man sitting motionless beside a transistor radio older than the Dead Sea Scrolls. I waved my piece of paper at him, but he ignored me, perhaps he is blind. A woman walked out from the adjacent room, took my slip of paper, then presented a crusty brown notebook where I'm supposed to affix my signature. Suddenly, two kids, apparently her children, came up to her to ask for their baon, and she starts arguing with them for about ten minutes while I'm standing there like the Invisible Woman, waiting for her to hand me my freaking parcel. When her kids slink away, she finally remembered that I exist and hands me—what, the piece of paper

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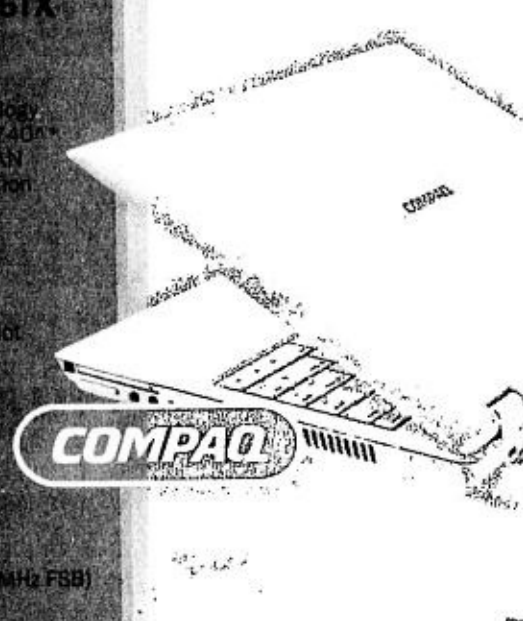
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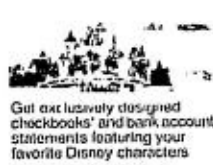
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PHILIPPINE
SOUND BITES
JERER

SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2006

Sound Bites

MUSICIANS ARE THE NEW POETS. Their mellow wisdom wafts over the airwaves and hits you squarely in the heart. So the next time you find yourself tongue-tied, take your cue from the lyrics these music lovers live by. Go ahead, quote yourself happy!

Rico Blanco

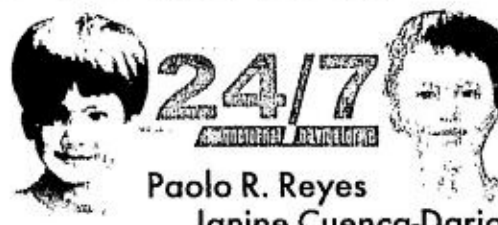
vocalist, Rivermaya
Tatlong oras na akong nagpapa-cute sa'yo/Di mo man lang pinapansin ang bagong T-shirt ko.

—“Ligaya” (Eraserheads)
• Rivermaya performs live at the 2006 MTV Asia Awards tonight in Bangkok, Thailand. Catch them at Conspiracy on May 10, PICC on May 12, CCP Grounds on May 13, Café Lupe on May 17, and Splash Island on May 20.

Cynthia Alexander

singer-songwriter
We're captive on the carousel of time/We can't return, we can only look behind/From where we came/And go round and round and round/In the circle game.

—“The Circle Game” (Joni Mitchell)
• Catch Cynthia Alexander at Conspiracy tonight at 9 p.m., '70s Bistro on May 20, Party



Central on May 26, and at the Kaogma Festival (Camarines Sur, Bicol) on May 27.

Marc Abaya

vocalist, KJwan/MTV VJ
But the fool on the hill/Sees the sun going down/And the eyes in his head/See the world spinning round.
—“The Fool On The Hill” (The Beatles)
• Catch KJwan at the 2nd Music Jam (G-Strip Parking Lot, Greenhills) on May 19, Absinth on May 25, and at Saguljo and Freedom Bar on May 31.

Armi Millare

vocalist & keyboardist, Up Dharma Down
Cruel is the gospel that sets us all free/Then takes you away from me.
—“Cruel” (Prefab Sprout)



SAVANNAH Lumen sizzles

• Catch Up Dharma Down at the Bel-Air Covered Courts tonight at 9 p.m., Conspiracy on May 9, and Saguljo on May 9 & 27.

Lourd de Veyra

vocalist, Radioactive Sago Project
And we're just another piece of the puzzle/Just another part of the plan/How one life touches the other/It's so hard to understand.
—“Ever Since The World Began” (Survivor)
• Catch Radioactive Sago Project at Saguljo on May 11, The Fort on May 18, the Rockwell Jazzfest on May 19, and at the Kaogma Festival (Camarines Sur, Bicol) on May 27.

Savannah Lumen

jazz singer
There's nothing you and I won't do/I'll stop the world and melt with you.
—“Melt With You” (Modern English)
• Catch Savannah Lumen at the launch of her

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2nd Batch	April 3 to April 7
3rd Batch	April 10 to April 18
4th Batch	April 19 to April 25
5th Batch	April 26 to May 2
6th Batch	May 3 to May 9
7th Batch	May 10 to May 16
8th Batch	May 17 to May 23

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Per DCM-BFAD Permit No.0002 series of 2006

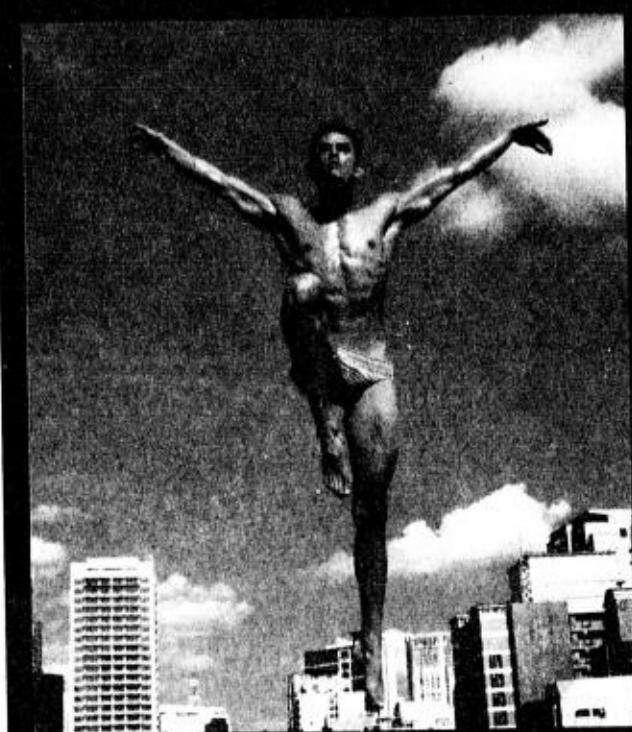
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recreation

3

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With a capital L

By Tim Yap
Photos by Lope Navo

NOTHING EXCITES ME MORE THAN NEW talent that fuels the scene with a newfound energy, prompting an avalanche of creativity that gives the industry the right lust it needs.

Welcome Lope Navo. His sexy and surreal images of luscious men and women have been gracing the glossies in a bold and bodacious way that gives me goosebumps to no end. I first saw his work in Metro Magazine and have since been a believer in this latest addition to the vivacious visual snipers that our town boasts of.

Super! has worked with him in last week's spread of Keanna Reeves and Bianca Gonzales, and the response has been nothing short of amazing. Recently, he staged a one-man-show at Nuvo, where his works of body art were displayed on the halls of the revered party spot.

Here is an aphrodisiac appetizer of things to come.



SELF-PORTRAIT of
the Super! artist

Natural na Sagot sa Pahirap na Sakit

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More than a spa ... it's a Wellness Mall offering all you need under one roof, so you can enjoy a sense of well-being all the time

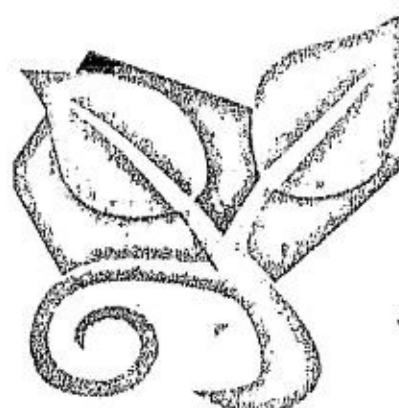
More than a car showroom ... It's an Auto Mall where you'll find what you want to make your ride a breeze

More than a supermarket ... it's the ultimate Hypermarket that gives you everything you need for your home and your family

More than a recreational area ... It's a Fun Ranch packed with exciting and educational activities that are guaranteed to provide total family entertainment

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SUPER SELECTIONS Kicking Rabbits

By Pam Pastor

YOUR NEXT FEW WEEKENDS will be rife with action—and flying balls—if Instituto Cervantes had anything to say about it.

This month, they will be screening four football movies—a tribute to a sport that is also a symbol of regional rivalries in Spain. The screenings will be held in anticipation of the Football World Cup.

"Días de fútbol," which will be screened today at 6:15 p.m., is about a group of friends who use football as therapy. Each person has his own story. There's Jorge, with his difficult job and a girlfriend who just dumped him; Gonzalo



"REAL, la película"



"EL PORTERO"

the law student who needs romance in his life; Carlos who is desperate to become a great actor but couldn't get a break; and Antonio, who had just gotten out of prison. Don't be fooled by the amount of drama—this film is actually a comedy.

"El portero," which will be screened on May 13 at 6:15 p.m., was directed by Gonzalo Suárez. It is the story of a goalkeeper who finds himself in the midst of



"DÍAS de fútbol"

political rebellion after the bloody Spanish Civil War. He joins the maquis to sabotage the operations of a repressive regime.

"El penalti más largo del mundo," which will be screened on May 20 at 6:15 p.m., is about Fernando the reserve goalkeeper of a regional football team who has not played for a single minute during the entire season. He finds his chance to shine during the final game of the league.

"Real, la película," directed by Borja

Manso, will be screened on Saturday, May 27 at 6:15 p.m. This documentary about Spanish soccer club Real Madrid, which combines fiction and reality, traces the history of the club and its fans. David Beckham, Raúl González, Zinedine Zidane, Ronaldo and many other big football names can be seen in the film.

If you want to watch any of the movies, head over to 855 T.M. Kalaw St. 1000 Ermita, Manila. Admission is free.

But if football isn't your thing, you can check out the book launching of Endangered: Papers from the First International Congress on Fil-Hispanic Architecture on May 16, 7 p.m.

You can also check out the exhibit of Posters from Don Quijote Movies which features 40 posters from different countries—all featuring films based on Don Quijote de La Mancha.

The exhibit will run until May 31, 2006.

Visit manila.cervantes.es or e-mail cenmi@cervantes.es.

TIENDESITAS : PINOY'S BEST EVERYDAY!

Tiendesitas is Pasig City's newest shopping and family entertainment destination owned by Ortigas & Company, one of the Philippines' most respected names in the real estate and property development industry. It is managed by Greenhills Shopping Center, the country's value shopping mecca. Inaugurated last September 26, 2005, Tiendesitas is expected to rival the highly successful and world-renowned Chatuchak Market in Bangkok, Thailand.

Located at the corners of Ortigas, Julia Vargas, and E. Rodriguez (C-5) Avenues in Bgy. Ugong, Pasig City, Tiendesitas caters primarily to value-conscious foreign and domestic shoppers. It showcases the best the Philippines can offer – native food, fashion wear and accessories, furniture, antiques, handicrafts, personal care and novelty items, pets, plants, and other proudly Philippine-made products.

Tiendesitas sits on a 30,000 sq.m. area within Frontera Verde, an interim 18.5-hectare Ortigas development project. It houses 12 pavilions, called "villages", which are of Maranao-inspired architecture. Indigenous materials were used such as treated cogon grass for the roof, old *calesa* wheels transformed into chandelier frames, and *duyans* scattered around to allow short breaks amidst frenzied shopping activities. The result is a stylized and unique Filipino architecture and is a novel interpretation of the conventional *bahay kubo*. The design of the complex also gave attention to the needs of the disabled and elderly.

More than 450 traders from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao are offering specialty merchandise from all the regions. Hagglng *ala-tiangge* is the norm as shoppers discover the treasures and pleasures of Philippine-made goods and produce.

At night, shoppers can be treated to acoustic and live band performances. There is also an area dedicated to special shows, exhibits, and unique Filipino presentations. Kids and adults can also enjoy riding the *kalesa* which goes around Tiendesitas. Shopping hours are from 12 noon to 12 midnight, daily.

Because you want something different.

More than a *tiangge*...TIENDESITAS is a new twist to the usual shopping experience!

At Tiendesitas, it's Pinoy's best, everyday!

Unearth unique buys and marvel at world-class merchandise from the various regions of the Philippines showcased in its 12 villages.

Relish food specialties like the "bagnet" of Ilocos, "batchoy" of Iloilo, "inihaw na panga" of Davao, and many more tasty delights.

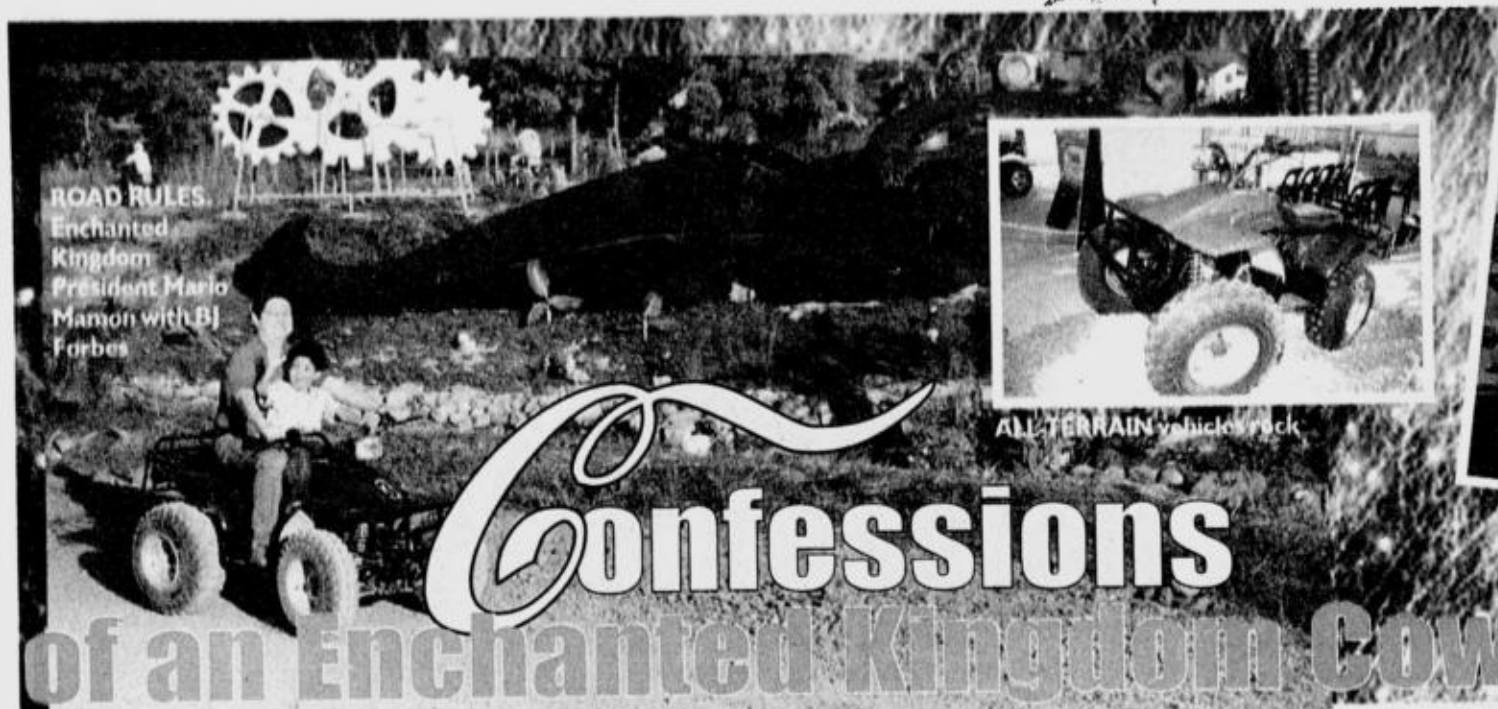
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ROAD RULES. Enchanted Kingdom President Mario Manion with BJ Forbes



ALL-TERRAIN vehicle truck



REEL ROYALTY. The Exodus throne



BIG DADDY. Sen. Bong Revilla and his son Ram



YAYA O. Iya Villania ready for the ride



SAFETY SANDWICH with Arvin De Guzman

By Pam Pastor

I ZOOMED OFF INTO THE DARK NIGHT, my hands tightly wrapped around the all-terrain vehicle's handlebars. Actually, "zoomed off" is an exaggeration. It was more like crawled. Feeling a little more daring, I pressed my finger against the thumb-operated accelerator and I lurched forward, up a rocky hill. The whole scene—the dark sky, the rocky roads, the sound of the motors, our helmet-clad heads—reminded me of Jay Taruc's recent iWitness documentary, the one where he and a companion hopped on motorcycles and rode from one province to another in search of the legendary *aswang*. But unlike me, they weren't moving at a snail's pace. Unlike them, I was not on a deserted road. And there was no *aswang* in sight. Not even close.

We were in Enchanted Kingdom. I am not a speed devil—quite the opposite actually. The only kind of speed I need is satisfied by my DSL connection. And so when I found out that the new attraction they were unveiling—Exodus the Ride—was a guided tour around a 1-hectare ATV track which included volcanic rocks, river stones, logs and a suspended bridge—I wasn't exactly eager to try it. I was happy enough to just sit back and watch the others, including some actors from Exodus the Movie, which was co-produced by Enchanted Kingdom and is the inspiration behind the ride, give it a shot.

I am what you call a Classic Enchanted Kingdom Coward. You cannot make me ride the Space Shuttle, not even if you pay me. I rode the Jungle Log Jam twice and Anchors Away and Flying Fiesta once—years ago—and I think that's enough for this life-

What does it take to kill your inner coward? A ride on Enchanted Kingdom's The Exodus

time. I no longer ride the bumper cars—over the past few years, the idea of getting into a car with the intention of bumping into other cars just lost its appeal for me. I do ride the Roller Skater—the baby roller coaster—but I keep my eyes shut and scream my head off the entire time. I ride the Wheel of Fate too but I always make sure that no one spins our gondola. Rialto and the 4D Theater are my favorites but the Rio Grande Rapids is on top of my list. I can ride it ten times straight. But to be completely honest, my three favorite Enchanted Kingdom attractions are these: the tacones, the spiral hotdogs and the Milo soft serve ice cream. They're really good.

But cowardice had to be set aside during the launch of Exodus the Ride. I think it was the sight of so many kids hopping on the all-terrain vehicles that finally convinced me to try it. I finally got on, but not before making sure I had a safety sandwich. I made sure my

friend was riding just a few feet in front of me and my boyfriend was just behind me.

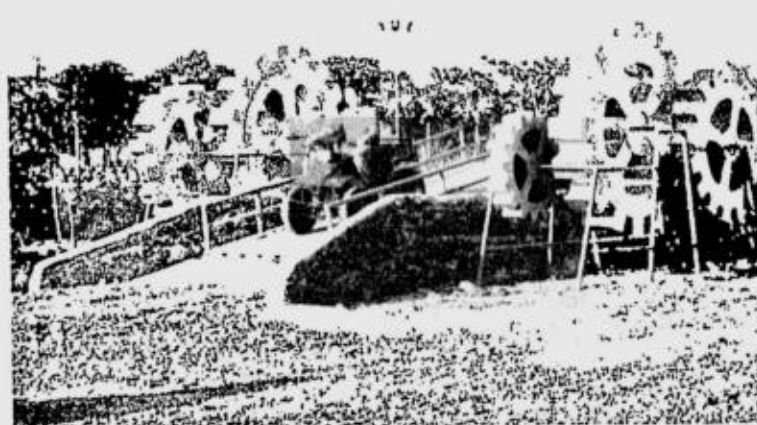
Operating the ATV was easy enough. It took me all of five seconds to learn which buttons and levers to press. Gathering the courage to go faster was a little harder. But when I reached the hills, I had no choice but to hit the accelerator. It was the only way for me to ride over them with ease. Before I started blaming all the tacones and hotdogs I ate for making me too heavy to hit the hills, I realized that all I had to do was increase speed.

After one lap around the track, I began to feel more comfortable and I started enjoying the sights. Props from Exodus the Movie had been strategically placed around the track for an extra touch. I was still slower than most of the riders but I was finally able to maneuver through the roads with ease. I skipped the bridge and the pool of water though and still preferred to take the easier route.

When I got off the ATV, my hands were cold and my knees still felt a little weak from the excitement. I caught my breath while watching the FestiVal Danze, which begins with a parade and becomes a full dance concert that showcases varied rhythms, different dance numbers—from boogie and classical moves to wild jungle beats—and colorful fireworks. My favorite part was the magic show. FestiVal Danze, which was conceptualized and staged by director Freddie Santos can be enjoyed tonight, tomorrow and on May 13 and 14 at 6 p.m.

Exodus the Ride is a big thrill—for speed freaks, for adventure-seekers and even for big cowards like me. And I wasn't done with my attempt yet.

The following week, I continued my developing love affair with Exodus the Ride. Armed



THINK of The Exodus as an extreme obstacle course

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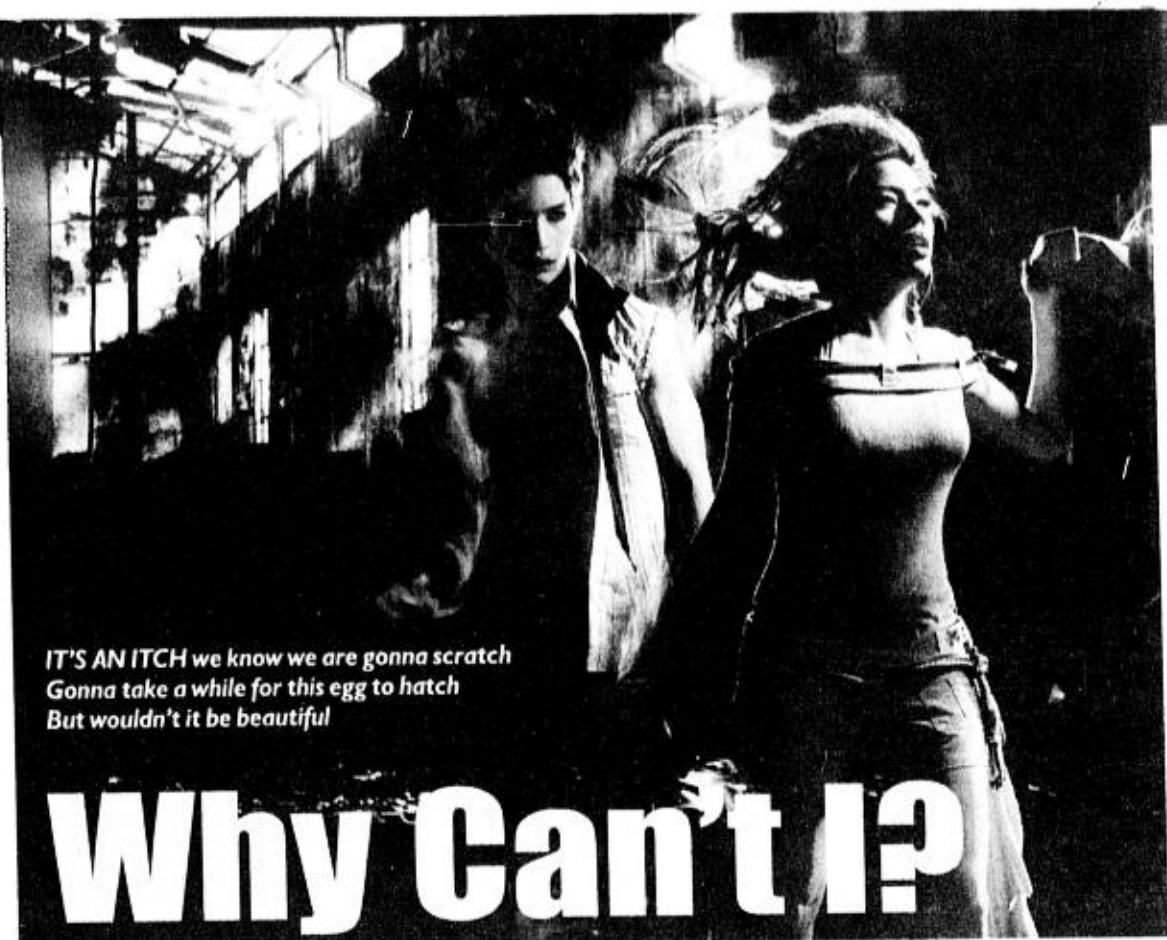
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GET A LOAD of me, get a load of you
Walkin' down the street, and I hardly know you
It's just like we were meant to be



IT'S AN ITCH we know we are gonna scratch
Gonna take a while for this egg to hatch
But wouldn't it be beautiful

Why Can't I?

By Liz Phair

Get a load of me, get a load of you
Walkin' down the street, and I hardly know you
It's just like we were meant to be

Holding hands with you when we're out at night
Got a girlfriend, you say it isn't right
And I've got someone waiting too

What if this is just the beginning
We're already wet, and we're gonna go swimming

Why can't I breathe whenever I think about you
Why can't I speak whenever I talk about you
It's inevitable, it's a fact that we're gonna get down
to it
So tell me
Why can't I breathe whenever I think about you

Isn't this the best part of breakin' up
Finding someone else you can't get enough of
Someone who wants to be with you too

It's an itch we know we are gonna scratch
Gonna take a while for this egg to hatch
But wouldn't it be beautiful

Here we go, we're at the beginning
We haven't f*ed yet, but my heads spinning

Why can't I breathe whenever I think about you
Why can't I speak whenever I talk about you
It's inevitable, it's a fact that we're gonna get down
to it
So tell me
Why can't I breathe whenever I think about you

High enough for you to make me wonder
Where it's goin'
High enough for you to pull me under
Somethin's growin'
out of this that we can control
Baby I am dyin'

Why can't I breathe whenever I think about you
Why can't I speak whenever I talk about you
It's inevitable, it's a fact that we're gonna get down
to it
So tell me
Why can't I breathe whenever I think about you

Visual direction by XANDER ANGELES
Style script by MILLET ARZAGA
Associate producer: DAVID MILAN
Facial effects: LALA FLORES using FACE IT
makeup line from PENSHPPE
Starring: VICTOR BASA and NIKKI GIL
Creature costumes by PENSHPPE



ISN'T this the best part of breakin' up
Finding someone else you can't get enough of
Someone who wants to be with you too

Because you want it to drive you wild.



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about fantastic choices. Whichever it is, the Auto Mall
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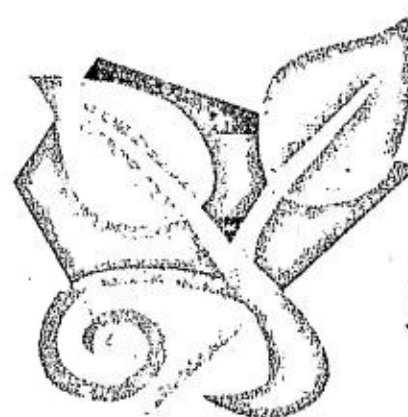
Browse through car models on display at 80 car showrooms,
or get those accessories you've always fancied to make your
vehicle a sure head-turner.

It's the supreme stop where you'll find everything you need
to make your ride a breeze!

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Porsche Boxster - courtesy of PGA Cars, Inc.



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This song is the soundtrack of the images that you see on this page. The music and the visuals echo an itch we are all familiar with—the passion, the desire and the yearning to find someone.

WHY CAN'T I breathe whenever I think about you
Why can't I speak whenever I talk about you

Because your kids want a new experience.



More than a recreational area... it's a park packed with fun and educational activities, right in the heart of the city!

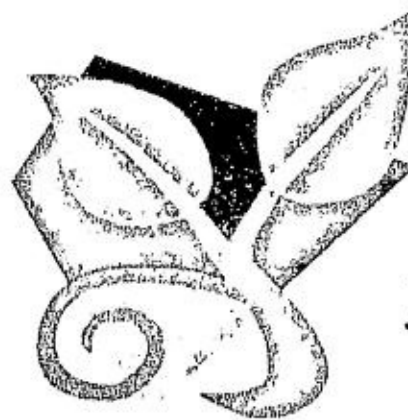
Spend an unforgettable day with your kids at the Fun Ranch at Frontera Verde.

Have fun at the petting zoo, carousel, and interactive play areas. Family-themed restaurants and snack carts provide a welcome break as your family enjoys other attractions like a kiddie salon, photo shop, day care center, bookstore, and animal spa.

Here, you'll have total family entertainment without having to leave town!

At FRONTERA VERDE, you get the widest and most diverse shopping, dining, and leisure options. That means more choices, more savings, more finds... and more fun!

Frontera Verde is conveniently located at Ortigas Avenue corner E. Rodriguez Ave. (C-5), Brgy. Ugong, Pasig City.



FRONTERA
VERDE

Because you want more!

THE BATTLE worn artist is regaining his strength while doing some sipsip with one of the sponsors.

caught by

andy MACHE

www.dont-touch-my.com

TIM YAP and Issa Litton supremely hosted the show.

COOL fashion by Whoops

BARRAGES of guitar tunes screaming over the battle ground

WHERE there are musicians, beautiful girls aren't far.

I SHOWED UP IN FULL BATTLE GEAR. SHOULDER MOUNTED camera, two handheld semi-automatic digital cameras and two belts of batteries across my shoulders. In other words, I was ready for the battle. The terrain seemed difficult at first but it turned out to be a fabulous location. A dramatically lit Manila post office as backdrop to the stage made the event look grandiose. With an opening war whoop by our very own Tim Yap and Issa Litton as hosts, the battle commenced with Salamin at the front. 10 different bands from all over rocked the night as fireworks exploded in the back like mortar shells. Gabriel Valenciano danced as if he was avoiding hostile fire and Nicole Hernandez stirred up the flames.

A grand finale by Bamboo turned everything into a frenzy. Then it was over as fast as it had begun. Luckily there weren't any casualties except me—but that had more to do with all the free beer I was fed by the organizers of the event. 420 Entertainment.

We had a winner. "Powertone" deservedly got the loot. Huge cash prizes from sponsor Whoops and a 5-year contract with Warner Music. "Hanson" and "Gisostomo Ibarra" came in second and third with considerable spoils as well. That was the signal for me to retreat, lick my wounds and soothe the pain.

SINGER who was the undisputed champion of the battle

War Whoops and Battle Cries

COOL retro fashion fitting the rocky music

OUR HEROES. Bamboo showed those guys how to do it.

JUST in case you ever wondered. That's how the musician's see you.

SLAMMING the bass

ROCK music is a great medium to help you deal with all that inner pain.

THIS guy kept on hitting me with his rhythm stick.

Because you want a sense of wellbeing.



More than a spa... it's a Wellness Mall that will recharge your body and refresh your spirit!

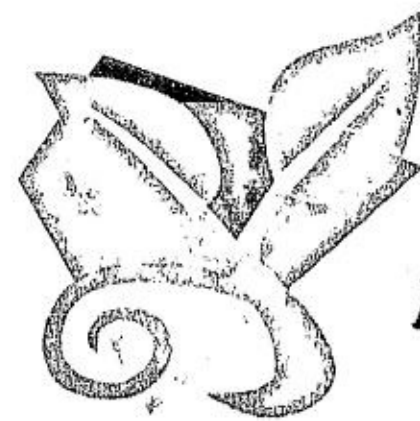
Find everything you need to stay in top shape at the Wellness Mall, only at Frontera Verde.

Here, you can have access to doctors' offices, HMOs, health centers, spas, medical laboratories, medical equipment stores, optical shops, and other medical services.

It's definitely all you need to enhance your wellbeing under one roof!

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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caught by

andy MACHE

www.dont-touch-my.com

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COOL guitar by Whooop

BARRAGES of guitar tunes screaming over the battle ground.

WHERE there are musicians, beautiful girls aren't far.

AND there's more fashionable fashion

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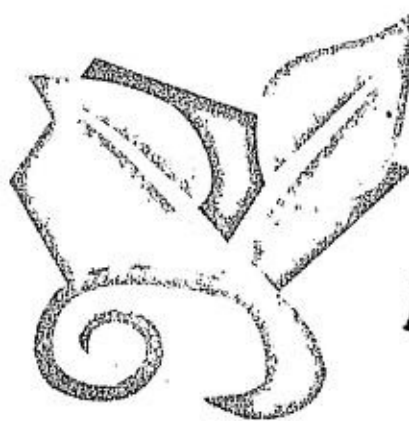
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**Goods of your choice
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Pangkabuhayan Business)
(4 winners)**



**SMART load business in SMART SIM
with P10,000 worth of load
(50 winners)**

To register, just text:

**IDDREG, complete name/
complete address/
age / gender**

**and send
to 232**

**Registration is free
You will receive a reply
message verifying your
registration**

**To check the affile
entries accumulated
just text:**

IDD

**and send
to 232**

P2.50/text

**SMART prepaid subscribers (Buddy, TALK N PAY, MP-SMART, Ultimate, and Payless)
the promo from April 8 (12MN) to June 30 (11:59 PM) 2006**

**Grand raffle draw will be held at WOLPAC, PLOT 1, EDSA, Alabang, Muntinlupa City
July 5, 2006 at 2 PM to be witnessed by a DTI Representative,
SMART Communication, Inc. and Ace Saatchi & Saatchi Ad Alliance, Inc.**

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